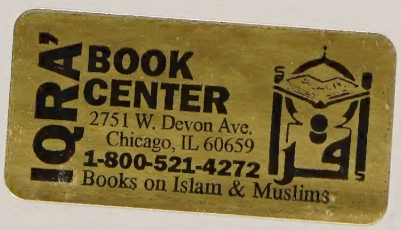
Syed Ali bin Uthman al-Hujweri

The Kashful Mahjub

"Unveiling the Veiled"

The Earliest Persian Treatise on Sufism

Translation with Special Commentary by
Maulana Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani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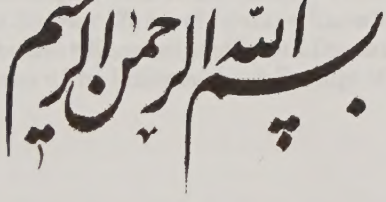

In the name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

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Translator's Preface

Kashful Mahjub which literally means "Unveiling the Veiled" is the earliest and the most comprehensive study of Sufism in Persian in which the author, Hadhrat Syed Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi al-Hujweri, has not only given a history of Sufism with *shariat* (Orthodox Islam) but has also quoted profusely from the Holy Qur'an (the word of God) and Hadith (word of the Holy Prophet) to prove the Qur'anic origin of all the Sufi doctrines in a masterly manner.

The chief merit of this work is that the celebrated author speaks about various aspects of Sufism from his personal experience of Divine Nearness and unitive life as a thoroughbred Sufi, unlike the European scholars (known as Orientalists) and some exoteric Muslim scholars, who are in the habit of looking at Sufism from a distance without even knowing and understanding what Sufism is.

I should say that they do not even know what Islam itself is. For, had they known the spiritual significance of Islam and its higher spiritual values of Divine Nearness, Union and Communion, which culminates in *fana-fi-Allah*, *baqa-bi-Allah*, *haqiqat* and *ma'rifat* which is the heart and core of Islam, enjoyed by the Prophet (s.a.w.) and his companions, they would have seen no difference between *shariat* and *tasawwuf* (Sufism). They would have seen *tasawwuf* as one of the branches of Islamic learning like the science of *tafsir* (exegesis) of the Qur'an, the science of Hadith (Prophetic example), *fiqh* (Muslim Law) etc.

Starting from an account of the Prophet's brimful experience of Divine Nearness, Presence, Union and Communion, the author proceeds with the description of the spiritual or mystical

experiences of the Companions (*ashab*) of the Prophet (s.a.w.), Companions of the Companions (*tabi'in*), their Companions (*taba-tabi'in*), and the *imams* (heads) of the four schools of Islamic law (*fiqh*): Imam Abu Hanifah, Imam Malik, Imam Shafiyi and Imam Ahmad bin Hambal. These four schools are collectively known as *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah*, and wield powerful influence over 95% of Muslims, rank and file, all over the world.

The author has also shown inter-exchange of the Islamic thought and Sufi experiences between these four Imams of *Ahli-Sunnah* and the twelve Imams of the Prophets family on whom the Shia community all over the world base their version of Islam, showing a vast area of agreement between the Sunni and Shia schools of Islam. And that is precisely why the *maqam* of Syed Ali Hujweri at Lahore is thronged equally by the Shia and Sunni people, leaving only a small minority of the bigoted leaders of both communities who thrive on creating difference.

Kashful Mahjub is thus a wonderful pacifier and unifier of various sects of Islam leaving only a tiny section of Muslim population, in the ratio of one in a million, who call themselves non-conformists or non-followers (*ghair muqallidin*). These are followers of Imam ibn Taimiyya who claim to interpret Islam directly from the Qur'an and Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.) without regard to the interpretation of the four scholars of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* mentioned above. This shows, ironically, that the so called *ghair muqallidin* (non-followers) are really followers themselves. They are the followers of a non-follower (ibn Taimiyya). The question also arises as to whether the interpretation of Islam by the four Imams of *Ahli-Sunnah* which was derived, learnt and understood **directly and immediately** from the Companions of the Prophet can be less correct than the interpretation of Imam ibn Taimiyya who lived six centuries **after** the companions?

Since Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri traces or establishes Sufic interpretation of Islam from its very source, the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself, and then from those who learnt directly from the Prophet (s.a.w.) down to his own time, the Sufic interpretation of Islam historically traced out by him is without the slightest doubt the real interpretation of Islam.

In other words, the object of *Kashful Mahjub* is not like the futile research of the Orientalists who try to prove the preposterous theory of "when Sufism entered Islam." On the contrary, his research was to find out "when Sufism was made to leave Islam," because the author has successfully and historically proven that the lives of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and his honourable Companions are brimful of high Sufic experience of Divine Nearness, Divine Presence, Union and Communion which constitute the inner core of Islam. It is in fact the Sufis who followed the Prophet (s.a.w.) in his arduous night vigils, frequent fasts, excessive worship, frugalities, and austerities; while the exoteric opponents of Sufism remain contented with the barest minimum, and regard night vigils, excessive fasts and austerities of the Sufis as acts of self-torture. They do not seem to have seen the *ayat* of the Qur'an in which Allah praises and admires "those whose bodies do not touch their beds in the nights" and "who spend the night with their Lord standing and prostrating before Him." The exoteric scholars even ignore the Qur'anic injunctions of *Sura Muzammil* in which Allah has

urged the Muslims "to keep awake during nights because these vigils tame the beast in man and subdue his ego," to enable him not only to be an honest, selfless and useful member of society but also to reach Divine nearness, Presence, Union and Communion with the Creator, to know His Will and thus live in peace with Him, peace with mankind and peace with himself.

The root cause of all the unsolvable problems of the modern world is that modern man has decided to be governed by man-made laws passed by a majority of votes in the legislative assemblies instead of God-made laws revealed to mankind through His successive prophets from time to time after the laws conveyed by the previous prophet were distorted by the passage of the centuries. And it is these man-made laws which have brought havoc in the world and brought mankind to the brink of destruction for the simple reason that he who invents a machine, knows the rules that are necessary to ensure its maintenance and efficient working. Since man has been created by God and not by any legislative assembly, the laws made by legislative assemblies are bound to result in disastrous consequences like those we are faced with in our time. George Bernard Shaw, one of the greatest thinkers of the century, rightly said that, "if leadership of the modern world were to be handed over to Muhammad," that is if Muhammad's Islam is applied to the world, "he would solve all its problems and bring about the much desired peace and happiness."

Thus the *khanqahi nizam,* or creation of a network of monasteries by the Sufi shaikhs in the length and breadth of the world of Islam, mentioned in *Kashful Mahjub* which has become the butt of criticism by the shortsighted "progressives" was meant to turn beasts into men and men into angels—to behave as peaceful and honest citizens, quite contrary to modern civilization which tends to turn the angels into men and men into devils, and thrives at the expense of weaker peoples. No amount of legislation, police and courts of justice are able to eradicate crimes, injustice and cruelty because the very civilisation based on the spirit of national superiority and national aggrandisement at the expense of weaker nations is a civilisation based on the principle of injustice and cruelty that cuts across all the pious notions of universal brotherhood and equality of mankind.

The whole burden of Thomas Arnold's book *Preaching of Islam,* is to show to the world that Islam spread and became a dominant force in the world within a century not by the sword as alleged by biased clergy, but by virtue of its tremendous spirit of love of mankind, universal brotherhood and equality of man irrespective of the distinction of caste, colour or creed, "...so that even the Christian knights who had come to finish the Muslims during the Crusades, were impressed by Muslim character so much that they left Christianity and embraced Islam in thousands."

It is again, Muslim civilization which gave incentive to the development of science and culture in Europe and pulled it out of the quagmire of the Dark Ages. Mohammed Asad Leopold Wies of Austria has said in his book *Islam at the Crossroads:*

> "In fact the greatest incentive to the scientific thought in the west came from the world of Islam. When Christianity had laid waste Europe's productive forces,

> science had become stagnant, superstition reigned supreme and social life was crude and primitive to an extent hardly conceivable today; the cultural influences of the Muslim world at first through the Crusades and the brilliant universities of Muslim Spain, and later through growing commercial relations, began to hammer at the bolted gates of Europe, and before the European scholars and thinkers appeared a civilization, refined, progressive, full of passionate life and in possession of spiritual and cultural treasures unheard of in that continent. The Muslims had developed an entirely new scientific world of their own and embarked upon the unknown avenues of research, philosophy and learning. All this they communicated to the Western world through different sources. And it can be safely said that the modern scientific age in which we are living today was not inaugurated in the cities of Christian Europe, but in such Islamic centres of learning as Damascus, Baghdad, Cairo, Cordoba, Nishapur and Samarqand."

The world now has once again sunk deep into the quagmire of modern civilization by dint of the unnatural and irrational dogmas of Christianity and preposterous notions of sovereignty of man as upheld by the Western brand of democracy, a preposterous economic system and preposterous principles of national superiority at the expense of weaker peoples, so that nothing except Islam can save it from imminent destruction. Contemporary thinker H.A.R. Gibb has said in his book "*Whither Islam*":

> "Islam cannot deny its own foundation and live. We have seen that Islam belongs to and is an integral part of the larger Western society. It is the complement and counterbalance to European civilization, nourished at the same spring and breathing the same air."

> "In the broadest aspect of history, what is happening now between Europe and Islam is the reintegration of Western civilization artificially sundered at the Renaissance. The Process could not end there. It is going on before our eyes, on a wider and vaster scale....We must call upon the Islamic society to restore the balance of Western civilization upset by the one-sided nature of that progress. At all events, Islam stands side by side with Europe in distinction from the true oriental societies of India and Far East. For the fullest development of its cultural and economic life, Islam cannot do without the cooperation of European society; and for the fullest development of its life, particularly its spiritual life, Europe cannot do without the forces and capabilities which lie within Islamic Society...."

He goes on to say:

> "Within the Western world, Islam still maintains the balance between exaggerated societies. Opposed equally to the anarchy of European nationalism and the regimentation of Russian communism, Islam has not yet succumbed to that

obsession with the economic side of life which is characteristic of present day Europe and present day Russia alike. Its social ethics have been admirably summed up by Prof. Massignon:

> "Islam has the merit of standing for a very egalitarian conception of a contribution from each citizen by tithe to the resources of the community. It is hostile to unrestricted exchange, to banking capital, to state loan, to indirect taxes on objects of prime necessity, but holds to the rights of the father and husband to private property and to commercial capital. Here again it occupies an intermediate position between the doctrines of bourgeois capitalism and Bolshevism communism."

> "But Islam has still greater service to render to the cause of humanity. It possesses a magnificent tradition of interracial understanding and cooperation. No other society has such a good record of success in uniting in an equality of status, of opportunity and of endeavour so many and so diverse races of mankind. The great Muslim communities of Africa, India, Indonesia and perhaps also the small Muslim communities in China and Japan, show that Islam still has power to reconcile apparently irreconcilable elements of race and tradition. If ever the opposition of the great societies of East and West is to be replaced by cooperation, the mediation of Islam is an indispensable condition. In its hands lies very largely the solution of the problem with which Europe is faced in its relations with the East. If they unite, the hope of a peaceful solution of the issue is immeasurably enhanced. But if Europe, by rejecting the cooperation of Islam throws itself in the arms of its rivals, the same issue can only be disastrous for both."

Professor A. J. Arberry also wants the Muslims to come and guide the Western nations to the path of peace, safety and prosperity in his book *Introduction to the History of Sufism:*

> "As a result of two wars which have devastated the whole world, men and women, everywhere feel a twofold need. We need a deeper understanding and appreciation of other people and their moral and spiritual achievements, and we want a new vision of the universe, and a clear insight into the fundamentals of their ethics and religion. How ought men to behave? Does God exist? What is His nature ? How is He related to His creation ? Especially, how can man approach Him? In other words, there is a general desire in the East and the West to know what the great souls have thought and said about the truth of God.

> "Mankind is hungry but the feast is there, though it is locked up and hidden away. It is far from useless to look into the pages of distant past. Whether we are Muslim or not, we are surely the children of one father, and it is therefore, no impertinence, no irrelevancy for Christian scholars to aim at rediscovering

> those vital truths which made the movement of Islamic spiritualism as powerful an influence for good. If they have the cooperation of their Muslim colleagues in this research, and signs are not wanting that they will, together they may hope to unfold a truly remarkable and inspiring history of human endeavour. Together they may succeed in retracing a pattern of thought and behaviour which will supply the needs of the many seeking re-establishment of moral and spiritual values in these dark and threatening times."

Contemporary historian, Toynbee has also said about Islamic virtues:

> "There are, of course, other Western ideas and institution which are doubtful blessings and one of these is our Western nationalism. The Turks and many other Islamic peoples with them have become strongly infected with nationalism as with other Western notions, salutary or pernicious. And we have to ask ourselves what is going to be the consequences of the intrusion of this narrow-hearted Western political idea into an Islamic world whose own ancestral tradition is that all Muslims are brothers by virtue of their common religion, in spite of differences of race, language and habitat. Now we are in a world in which distance has been annihilated by the progress of Western technology, and in which the Western way of life is having to compete with the Russian way of life."
>
> "The Islamic tradition of the brotherhood of man would seem to be a better ideal for meeting the social needs of the times that the Western tradition of sovereign independence for dozens of separate nationalities."
>
> "In the new situation in which the Western community finds itself since the second world war, its internal partition into about forty sovereign independenT national states is threatening to bring about the fall of a house divided against itself and yet the prestige of the West in the world is high enough to make the Western virus of nationalism still infectious. It is to be hoped that in the Islamic world at any rate, the spread of this Western political malady may be arrested by the strength of a traditional Islamic feeling."

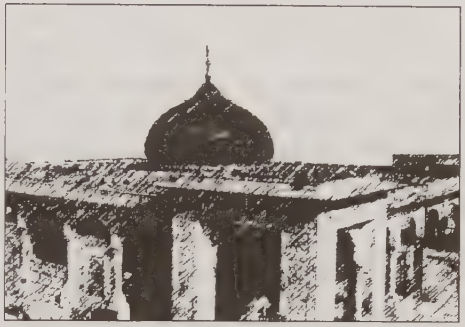
Having explained the importance of *Kashful Mahjub* in the field of spiritual progress, social behaviour, cultural achievements and Divine nearness for which the human soul is thirsting, we will now say something about the author himself and the nature of his mission.

Hadhrat Syed Ali bin Uthman al-Hujweri, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (Bestower of Spiritual Treasures) belonged to a place called Hujwer on the town of Ghazna in Afghanistan and came to the Indo-Pakistan subcontinent in the later part of the 5th century After Hijrah to preach Islam and converted large number of Hindus into Muslims.

Hadhrat Shah Shahidullah Faridi of the Lennard family of England embraced Islam in 1936 upon reading *Kashful Mahjub*. He was initiated into Sufism by my shaikh, Hadhrat

Maulana Syed Mohammed Zauqi Shah, and in completing the spiritual course in eighteen years, was commissioned as a Khalifah to guide others. Hadhrat Shah Shahidullah Faridi has paid the following tribute to the author of *Kashful Mahjub* in his introduction to the Lahore edition (Translated by R.A. Nicholson, published by Islamic Book Foundation, Ganj Bakhsh Road, Lahore):

> "His grave in Lahore is the most frequented of all saintly shrines in that city and one of the most famous in Pakistan and other nearby countries. His name is a household word, and his mausoleum the object of pilgrimage from distant places. [Only a few] of such pilgrims can ever read his book. His spiritual authority, then, transcends the world of literature and stands in its own right unsupported by outward evidences, however valuable these undoubtedly are."



The maqam of Syed Ali bin Uthman al-Hujweri in Lahore

Hadhrat Syed Ali Uthman al-Hujweri was the *murid* and *khalifah* of Hadhrat Shaikh Abul Fadhl Muhammad bin Hasan al-Khuttali who was *khalifah* of Hadhrat Abul Hasan al-Husri, *khalifah* of Hadhrat Abul Abbas al-Ashqani, *khalifah* of Hadhrat Abu Bakr Shibli, *khalifah* of Master Junaid Baghdadi who is the sixth in the spiritual lineage of Hadhrat Ali bin Abu Talib cousin and son-in-law of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri was a contemporary of Hadhrat Abul Qasim al-Qushairi (author of the world famous *Risalah Qushairiyah*), Shaikhul Islam Hadhrat Abdullah Ansari of Hirat, Hadhrat Abul Qasim Gorgani, Hadhrat Shaikh Abu Ali Farmadi (who was the shaikh of Imam Muhammad Ghazali), and Hadhrat Shaikh Abu Saeed Abul Khair of Mihna who also belonged to the *silsila* of Hadhrat Junaid of Baghdad. Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri travelled a lot, met many Sufi Shaikhs and learnt from them.

The contents of *Kashful Mahjub* show Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri was well versed in all the Islamic sciences such as *Tafsir* (exegeses) of the Qur'an, Hadith (sayings of the Prophet s.a.w.), *Fiqh* (Muslim Law) and dogmatic theology (*Ilmu Kalam*).

To turn to the present work itself, it was written at the request of a student of Sufism, Abu Saeed who belonged to the author's *silsila* and asked the Shaikh to compile a comprehensive study of *tasawwuf* (Sufism) to serve as a guide for the spiritual aspirants. Although the author was a past master in the science of Muslim Scholasticism and his judgments are based on logic, the conclusion he arrives at are the result of his deep spiritual experience, and that is the reason why he does not see any conflict between *shariat* and *tasawwuf*.

According to all the Sufi shaikhs *shariat* is the code of outer action and *tasawwuf* is the inner result in the realm of spiritual progress. In a nutshell, Sufism or *tasawwuf*, consists of *shariat*, *tariqat*, *haqiqat* and *ma'rifat*. *Shariat* is the road, *tariqat* is the name of journeying

on the road, *haqiqat* (Godhead) is the destination and *ma'rifat* is the secret which the pilgrim is vouchsafed on reaching the destination. It is from these heights of *haqiqat* and *ma'rifat* that the author always speaks, contrary to the observations of exoteric scholars and the European Orientalists who are unable to understand what the Sufis say and get confused.

Arberry has rightly said that in order to understand the Sufis a student of Sufism has to be somewhat a Sufi himself. But what we see today are the wild remarks of exoteric scholars absolutely wide off the mark. It appears they do not really understand Islam which according to them is the name of rituals without inner spiritual enlightenment or illumination called *haqiqat* and *ma'rifat* found in the Qur'an and Hadith. They read the passages in the Qur'an saying that Islam is the name of reaching Divine Nearness and Union but fail to understand what nearness and union mean. They read the Hadith al-Qudsi saying that when the spiritual aspirant reaches Divine nearness by virtue of supererogatory worship, he sees by Allah's sight, hears by His hearing and does everything by His power, but they do not know what it means, and get confused.

R.A. Nicholson[1] also suffered from this handicap perhaps more than the exoteric Muslim scholars because being a non-Muslim, he did not share the depth and spirit of Islamic belief known as *iman* and therefore, failed to understand what a Sufi shaikh means. The following are some of the mistakes which Nicholson's own countryman Hadhrat Shahidullah Lennard Faridi has pointed out in his (Nicholson's) translation of *Kashful Mahjub*:

> "One of the conspicuous qualities of this part [i.e. uncovering of eleven veils] of the book is the illustration by Hujweri of the spiritual core of the outward observances of Islam.... The aim is to lay stress on the point that outward observance are of no value unless they have spiritual content. Nicholson has made the unworthy remark that 'the author's view as to the worthlessness of outward forms of religion is expressed by striking boldness in his chapter on pilgrimage.' Anyone who has the least perspicuity into the mind of Hujweri can perceive the falsity of this remark. From the beginning to the end of the book he vehemently insists that *Tasawwuf* is not a contradictory element of the Islamic Code (*Shariat*). Nicholson has been merely obtuse in taking the observation that mere ritual without spirituality is valueless. What Hujweri is teaching is that 'You must perform your rituals spiritually not blindly.' In sum, it can be said that Hujweri's view are notable for balance and maturity."

Pointing out another mistake of Nicholson, Hadhrat Shahidullah says:

> "Hujweri appears to be a master of dogmatic theology (*Ilmu Kalam*).... He often uses the same kind of reasoning to prove the doctrines of the Sufis; but this is only an external method. The conclusions he reaches are always based on direct

[1] The translator of the earlier English translation of *Kashful Mahjub*

intuitive perception (spiritual experience). Hujweri is a strong unifier (*Muwahhid*). That is to say he is dominated by the experience of the Absolute Being and the Absolute Power of God, so that man cannot establish the relationship of intimacy with Him unless he brings to nought his own attributes. This is what is meant by *fana* (noughting), which is followed by *baqa* (enduring) which alludes to the abiding with God of the now illuminated spirit in the state of servanthood (*abdiyat*). Nicholson appears to think that it is difficult to reconcile this doctrine with Islamic belief, but he is wrong, for as he himself points out, and Hujweri emphasises, this does not mean the deification of man, but (it means) his being filled with the light of the Divine Attributes, while he retains his own essential humanity. This Hujweri explains by the example of piece of iron in a fire. When this iron becomes red hot, it assumes the attributes of fire, from which it is then indistinguishable, and in that state it may proclaim: "I am fire." But the latent link with its essential reality of 'ironess' is not severed, and on separation from fire it appears once again with its limited being. Hujweri sums up this exposition in his character sentence, "the attributes (*sifat*) of man are transformed, but not his essence (*dhat*)." Of course this is of necessity an incomplete expression of a spiritual experience, but it has the great advantage of clarifying a doubt that has misled not only so many mystics but whole communities."

The discussion mentioned above relates to the most important, but most difficult subject called *wahdat-ul-wujud* of which the least we talk is best, and that is why the author himself, the translator (Nicholson) and commentator (Shah Shahidullah) have talked about it in the briefest of words. The thing is that the question of *wahdat-ul-wujud* relates to God's Being. Who is He? Where is He? What is He like? What is His nature? These are the questions which have baffled the human brain since time immemorial and will continue to do so for the simple reason that the Creator cannot be comprehended fully by the created. It is simple logic; the infinite cannot be contained by the finite. However, man has not been left totally in the dark. Some hints are available for his guidance in the Qur'an and Hadith, which have been elaborated more or less by the saints of Islam as well as saints of other religions.

In particular Shaikh Muhayyudin ibn Arabi has come out with the most extensive explanation of this most intricate question in his books, *Futuhat-i-Makkiyah* and *Fusus-al-Hikam*. But since our author lived before ibn Arabi, he is naturally not very eloquent about it. The example of iron and fire given by him is quite explicit. It shows two states of existence: *fana* and *baqa*. In the state of *fana* man loses his being in God's Being, while in *baqa* he comes out and resumes his separate existence. But the doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujud* as expounded by ibn Arabi is even more than that. According to him, and he bases his conclusion on the Qur'an and Hadith, even the cold iron is not separate from fire. That is to say man, whether he is in the state of *fana* or *baqa*, has philosophically no being separate from God's Being. In other words God's being includes all being. This is the notion that goes by the name *wahdat-ul-wujud* which means that Being is one, and that is God's Being. All other beings are included in His Being like snow balls, waves and bubbles in the ocean. It

is argued by those who believe in *wahdat-ul-wujud* that since creation is the expression or outcome of God's power of creation, creation cannot be separated by the Creator, as a book cannot be other than the author. But when the book is printed on paper the heap of paper is not physically separate from but really one with the author. This is *wahdat-ul-wujud* in a nutshell; more or less equivalent to 'pantheism' of the English language.

But the doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujud* has become one of the greatest stumbling blocks for Nicholson and other orientalists. They think that *wahdat-ul-wujud* is against the monotheism of Islam and therefore, when the Sufis believe in *wahdat-ul-wujud* the orientalist jumps at their throats and say that having adopted the cult of pantheism of Hinduism and Christianity, the Sufis leave Islam and become Hindus and Christians. But the Sufis, who are the **staunchest** Muslims say that Monotheism (*tauhid*) of Islam may be incompatible with the Hindu or Christian brand of oneness of God called 'pantheism', but it is not incompatible with Islamic *wahdat-ul-wujud* because they believe, quite in accordance with the Qur'an and Hadith, that one God of Monotheism is the Great Divine Being which includes all beings in the universe. And the difference between *wahdat-ul-wujud* of Islam and pantheism of Hinduism and Christianity is this: While according to pantheism Rama, Krishna and Jesus Christ and for that matter, all idols can be worshipped because they are included in God's Being, according to Islamic *wahdat-ul-wujud*, man worship and idolatry is forbidden because God is unlimited and cannot be contained in the limited beings like Rama, Krishna, Jesus Christ and idols. Nor can these limited beings possess the vast and unlimited powers of the Almighty, in the same manner in which John's finger cannot possess all the attributes and powers of John, although his finger is not separate from his being. And in Islam idolatry is as ridiculous as asking John's finger instead of John to give you something, if John refuses to give it. The reader will find *wahdat-ul-wujud* elaborated furter in the text at the proper places.

Now we come to the explanation of *tasawwuf* (Sufism) which is the theme of *Kashful Mahjub*. In this connection we reproduce the article of our Shaikh Hadhrat Maulana Syed Mohammed Zauqi Shah (r.a.) on Sufism which is quite brief but comprehensive. He says:

Human greatness, or human perfection, if you so call it, depends very much upon the highest possible development of all the outer and inner qualities of man and upon the proper use that he makes of the qualities so developed.

Everything has two sides, the exterior and the interior. Its value depends, not so much upon its exterior, as upon its interior side. A box full of diamonds and precious stones is certainly more valuable than a similar, or even better looking box, full of ordinary stones and dust. A human being has likewise two sides, the external and the internal. He is a combination of body and soul. There is the visible and the invisible blended together in him and though, in his case, one is as necessary as the other, at least so far as the initial stages of his progress

are concerned, his ultimate superiority over the rest of creation depends more upon his inner merits, his intellectual capabilities, his spiritual attainments and the polish and the brilliance of his soul, than upon his exterior form and appearance and qualities of his body.

The mere development, however, of human powers cannot lead one to profitable results, unless such powers are correctly and properly used. Swordsmanship, for instance, might prove a curse if wrongly used. Or if science, instead of bringing good to humanity degenerates into a power of destruction, it certainly loses all its virtues and becomes a thing to be abhorred. Similarly, if the outer and inner qualities of man are developed, to any degree of proficiency, but are not put to proper use they can never lead to desirable results. This brings us to consider what constitutes the proper channel for the flow of human culture and activity.

A man's success in life depends upon the amount of knowledge he acquires of the universe and upon the proper use of that knowledge. The wider his knowledge, the greater are his chances of success. Knowledge of creation can never be complete without a sufficient knowledge of the Creator and the principles and policy upon which the universe is created and run. This is what science is searching for. The goal of Sufism and science is, therefore, the same.

There are people who do not feel inclined to believe in the existence of God. But they cannot disprove Him either, for it is more difficult to disprove than to prove God. Their attitude is more in the nature of agnosticism than atheism. That is to say they ignore rather than deny the existence of God. You cannot possibly disprove God, because by doing so you disprove the whole universe including yourself. You are obliged to believe in the existence of superior intelligent force controlling the universe. To be able to control and regulate the various conflicting forces in nature, the guiding-force ought to be stronger and more intelligent than everything else in the world, for a weak and blind force cannot function properly. It is therefore, a supernatural-force in the sense that it is superior to every other force in nature and cannot be completely comprehended by less intelligent and weaker, subordinate forces. They who pretend disbelief in God are thereby brought consciously or unconsciously in line with those who believe in Him, the difference in name does not matter. Willingly or unwillingly, they are all united on one point, namely, the existence of a supernatural, intelligent force guiding, directing, regulating and controlling the entire universe.

So, if there is a Creator, as undoubtedly there is, no knowledge of the universe will be of any high value without some knowledge of the Creator, and man, as the highest subordinate force in creation, will never be able to carry on his duties properly unless he is properly attached to the Creator. Detachment from the central power can only end in disaster. No unit in an institution, no soldier in any army and no officer in a state can do without maintaining proper connection with the central superior force. Without this connection everything is doomed to confusion and chaos. It is religion which guides us in this direction and regulates our relationship with God. And our relationship with God embraces our relationship with everything else in the world.

It is wrong to say that religion is a man's own private affair and has nothing to do with his social, political and economic activities. It is like saying something to the effect that loyalty to the king is a subject's own private affair and has nothing to do with stealing, committing murder, destroying parts of the king's kingdom or being guilty of sedition. God is a potent force. He is *al-Hayyul Qayyum* (which means that God is living and self-subsisting. He is living by His own self, without any external aid. He does not derive His powers from any external or foreign source; and apart from maintaining His own existence, He makes others exist by infusing life into them and by maintaining them throughout their existence) and nothing escapes Him. After creating the universe He has not retired into oblivion and has not become impotent or lost all interest in His creation. He is as potent as ever and His creatures cannot lose sight of Him without impairing their own position in the scale of creation. To maintain proper relations with God one has to behave properly in all walks of life. To effect this, one stands in need of religion.

Islam is no exception to the rule. It professes to be a revealed religion and corroborates all the Divine Truths revealed by all the preceding religions. Its only other claim is that it is cosmopolitan and its methods of approaching the Ultimate Object are simpler and more up-to-date. However, in common with other religions, it is made up of two sides, the outer and the inner. The outer side is called the ***shariat*** and the inner side, the ***tariqat.***

The ***shariat*** is subdivided into two parts:

i. ***Ibadat***
ii. ***Mu'amilat***

Ibadat concerns fundamental belief and forms of worship and regulates man's relation with God.

Mu'amilat pertain to man's relations with man and covers the social, economic and political fields of human activity.

Tariqat deals with the purification of the inner self and keeps in view the spiritual emancipation of mankind. Since body and soul are intertwined, as it were, *tariqat* cannot remain independent of *shariat* and the two work in cooperation.

There is a third thing called ***haqiqat*** which refers to the realities of this life as well as the life to come. It is a realisation and not a science. In other words *haqiqat* is what you actually see, feel and realise in the light furnished to you by the *tariqat*.

While Islam here may indicate "Mohammedanism" to some, in fact, Islam is as old as mankind. It has been the only True Religion of God at all times. For instance, Abraham was no other than a Muslim. Says the Holy Qur'an:

> "Abraham was neither a Jew nor a Christian but out and out a Muslim (devoted exclusively to Allah)" [3:67]

The *tariqat* plus *haqiqat* is termed *tasawwuf* or Sufism. It is in fact, the science and art of developing the spiritual faculties of man and trying to understand, as far as possible, the Deity, the Divine Work, and the Divine Mysteries. It is a science in as much as it deals with the systematic training of mind and soul, and the various methods of attaining the spiritual heights necessary for the realisation of Divine Realities. It is an art in so far as it consists of the practical work necessary for the attainment of the object in view. It is theory and practice combined. Knowledge and practical work follow and re-follow each other in rotation. The one is as necessary as the other; without knowledge one cannot work and without work the desired knowledge cannot be gained. But the knowledge necessary to commence the work is different from the knowledge which follows the successful termination of the work. The knowledge necessary for a beginner is supplied by the *shariat* and administered by the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) and after the passing away of the Prophet (s.a.w.) to the higher regions, by his deputies who are called Shaikhs, Murshids, Pirs or teachers. They are the *Ulama-i-Rashikin*, that is the learned people firm in their knowledge and they have the distinction of being recognised as Heirs to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

This personal element is an important factor in the dissemination of *tasawwuf*. Mere book knowledge leads one nowhere. A sick person stands in need of both the physician and the prescription. Very often, he stands more in need of the physician than the prescription. Unless there is a competent physician to administer the prescription properly, the prescription remains useless. God sent us both the physician and the prescription, the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and the Holy Qur'an. The Holy Qur'an without the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) would not have brought about that marvellous change which has been the pride of Arabia. The functions of the Holy Physician have been described in their proper order in the following passage of the Qur'an:

> "He it is Who hath been raised up amidst the unlettered, an Apostle from among themselves who (the Apostle) reads to them passages of the Qur'an; and purifies their souls; and teaches them the Scripture and Wisdom." [62:2].

Accordingly the duties of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) consist of the following four things:

1. To recite the Qur'an to his people (i.e. to communicate to them the message of God).

2. To purify their souls, which is quite a different thing from merely conveying to the people the word of God. Without such purification they would not be able even to understand properly the message of God.

3. To teach them the Holy Book. It is a different thing altogether from announcing to them the message of God. The 'teaching' here means explaining to the people the meaning and the real significance of the passages of the Qur'an and training them in the proper method of observance of Qur'anic Ordinances. Such teaching can only be effective when the process of purification of the soul has been gone through properly.

4. Finally to bring them face to face with the wisdom which follows the knowledge and action stated above.

The importance of a personal element in affairs relating to the amelioration of mankind can hardly be disputed. Fortunately this personal element has been handed down to us in the form of the Shaikh.

Muhammad, the Holy Prophet (peace be upon him) combined in himself the leadership of all the various functions at his time. He was a religious teacher, spiritual guide, social reformer, commander-in-chief and political head of the Muslims. In short, he combined in his person all the functions of a temporal and spiritual leader. He was at once a king and a prophet. His four successors, Abu Bakr, Umar, Uthman and Ali (peace be upon them all), inherited this leadership in toto. The temporal power and the spiritual lead were centred in the same personality.

Unfortunate events subsequent to the martyrdom of Imam Hussain, the son of the Khalifah Ali and the grandson of the Holy Prophet (God's blessings be upon them all), sounded the death-knell of the amalgamated leadership. The temporal power was usurped by Bani Ummayya, and the spiritualists were left to take care of themselves. Bloodshed on the battlefield of Karbala, however, could not chill the enthusiasm of the spiritualists, and they flocked round the sons and grandsons of Ali in thousands and in tens of thousands, to drink deep of the fountain of knowledge and reality. The Ummayyads grew suspicious of the growing popularity of the spiritual successors of Hussain. Under the Ummayyad and Abbassid Caliphs, the spiritualists were subject to persecution. That is why, for a long time, spiritual lessons were given secretly. It is one of the reasons why spiritualists have sometimes been called Mystics.

Aimma Ahlul Bayt are the leaders from the Holy Prophet's Family. *Aimma* is a plural of *imam* which means 'leader' and *ahli bayt* means 'members of the family'. These *imams* or leaders belonging to the Prophet's family, occupy the foremost rank as regards spirituality and other aspects of religion. All classes of Sufis, Dervishes and Faqirs owe their origin to them. Go to any Sufi in the world today and he will trace his pedigree to them and through them to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). The Holy Prophet is like an ocean; Ali an outlet; and *Aimma Ahlul Bayt* are as canals that have carried the waters to the thirsty.

The various Sufistic Orders, or "Dynasties" as they are sometimes called, are a later development but such development is in form only, and not in spirit. It is like this: Suppose,

a teacher of very high spiritual attainments and extraordinary internal powers makes his appearance or, say, comes out to India and spreads spirituality there. His pupils, adherents, and followers are distinguished from others by being called after his name. Another teacher of similar attainments comes and does likewise; a different name is assumed by the followers of his school. They differ merely in their mode of teaching. Chishtis, Nizamis, Qadris, Naqshabandis, Mujaddidis, Abul Ulais, Suhrawardis, Madaris, Qalandaris, Maulwites, Shadhilis, Rifais, Badawis, Sanusis and others are different Sufistic Orders spread over the world.

It is not intended to carry the reader here into complicated technicalities on the subject and tire him with information that may prove dry and uninteresting to a lay mind; but in order to help him to catch a glimpse of what Sufi's work is like, and what sort of attainment he aspires to, a summary account of *suluk*, a Sufi's Course will now be given.

As already stated, to begin with, you need the service of one who knows, a teacher, a Shaikh, or a Murshid, call him by whatever name you please. The initiative must come from him. He initiates you into the Unseen within you into harmony with the Unseen without. He keeps a constant watch over you and saves you from slips and pitfalls. He acts as a medium between the high and the low, between the Deity and humanity, between where you are and where you ought to be, or in plainer language, between you and your God. So the Shaikh or Murshid is an indispensable necessity in the spiritual emancipation of man.

We spend a good deal of the earlier portion of our life in physical bondage. Our libraries and laboratories only tighten the bonds. Even independent thinking creates fresh chains for us. The moment we come in contact with the Shaikh, we enter upon a new era of liberation. The ties are loosened, the chains are broken and the journey begins. From the Seen we gradually move on to the Unseen and after plunging into the fathomless depths of the Unseen, we have to come back to the Seen to complete our course. The following diagram will clearly illustrate the beginning and the end of a spiritual wayfarer called *salik* (seeker):

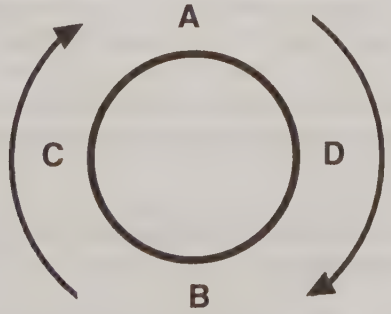


Figure 1. The Spiritual Course

In the preceding diagram (Figure 1), B is the starting point for the beginner. The arrows indicate the direction of the course. B-C-A is the upward journey which finishes at A. You then make a further progress by coming down to B via A-D-B. When you complete the circle, you finish your spiritual courses and attain "human perfection".

It will be observed that B is the point which is the first and the last, the point where you start and finish. To a superficial observer, you appear in the end what you were in the beginning, but, as a matter of fact, you and others who know you inwardly find in you a wonderful change. At the start you know nothing about the circle and nothing about your real self. At the end, you find that you have traversed the entire circuit and have found yourself; that you have personally been through all the different gradations of life; that you have directly known (of course, according to your personal capacities) all the various forces of nature that move the universe. You discover that all these forces are, in a way, centred in you and ultimately, you realise that at point B, you are in a comprehensible form from what you were at point A, an incomprehensible formlessness. In short, you realise the sense, the force and the significance of the religious phraseology that you are God's Image or God's Lieutenant on earth and you understand better the meaning and sense of the following passages in the Qur'an:

> "And thus did We show unto Abraham the Kingdom of Heaven and Earth (high and low) that he might become one of those who believe firmly" [6:75]
>
> "Hereafter We will show them Our signs around them and within them, until it becomes manifest unto them that it is the truth" [61:53]
>
> "And not without purpose did We create the heaven and the earth and whatever is in between them" [38:27]
>
> "And verily, He hath created you in diverse stages (i.e. He has brought you to your present stage through a variety of conditions and states)." [71:14]
>
> "Unto thy Lord is the Ultimate goal of it (i.e. of everything in the universe and of knowledge about the time of such termination)" [79:44]
>
> "Such is God, your Nourisher and Maintainer, there is no god but He, the Creator of all things, worship Him (i.e. obey Him with love) for He supervises everything and takes care of it." [6:102]

At this stage, the powers of observation in a Sufi and his perceptions help him considerably to realise passages like the following:

> "We are nearer to him (man) than his jugular vein." [50:16]
>
> "We are nigher unto him than ye are, but ye perceive not." [55:85]

"And He is with you wheresoever you be." [57:4]

"There is no secret conference of three but He is their fourth, nor of five but He is their sixth, nor of less than or more but He is with them wheresoever they may be." [58:7]

"He is the First and the Last, and the Manifest and the Hidden; and He knoweth all things." [57:3]

"See ye not how Allah hath brought under your subjugation and control whatever is in heavens and earth (in the higher and the lower planes) and hath abundantly poured upon you His favours both visible and invisible." [31:20]

To return to Figure 1, the upward march, B-C-A is a difficult and uphill task. The downward move, A-D-B is comparatively easy. As a matter of fact B-C-A passes through exactly the same fields as A-D-B. In other words, you can observe during the upward march what you do observe during the downward move, but your observations during the upward journey are bound to be misleading. You cannot understand properly anything below point A, unless you once reach the point A. Unless you grasp the root properly, you cannot make the branches your own. So the best teachers prefer to carry their pupils up through B-C-A, with closed eyes, as it were. They do not allow them observation on their upward march. It saves time and labour and prevents mistakes resulting from partial and incomplete knowledge. The "eyes" are, however, utilised when the downward course A-D-B is traversed. This is the safest and the shortest way to success.

All the various hard and fast rules laid down for the completion of the spiritual course are necessary during the first round only. When you complete the course and finish, for the first time, the rounds B-C-A and A-D-B, you are liberated. You are now at liberty to go up and down as many times as you like without observing the rules of procedure you observed during your first round. You may go up either way and come down likewise; you may go up half way and return; or you may stop, for any length of time, at any of the intermediate stages. There have been people who have preferred to remain permanently at point A, and have refused to climb down. The luxury at the point A is called ***Lazzat-i-uluhiyat,*** which means *Luxury of Divinity* and is so great that no earthly pleasure, whatsoever, can match it and everyone is tempted to remain there for good; but human greatness really depends upon descending to point B, and faithfully fulfilling the functions of *Perfect Man,* so long as the physical body retains the power of sustaining the soul within.

There are innumerable methods of approaching the goal, but they may be divided broadly into the following three:

1. Leading a strictly pure and religious life, provided that the religion is correctly understood, properly handled and duly observed. It is a lengthy and comparatively

dry course, but is generally recommended to the masses because, though lengthy and dry, it is all the same quite safe.

2. Extra hard work, both physical and spiritual; i.e. doing a great deal more than the irreducible minimum prescribed by the *shariat*. It is shorter and more interesting than the first, but more difficult. It leads to better results.

3. Cultivating and developing Love of God. It is the shortest, the sweetest and the most interesting path, leading to the best and the most valuable results; but it is not within the reach of everyone and is not always safe for those who are not meant for it.

There are people who combine in them the first two, or the last two, or all the three methods, in different proportions.

Ordinarily, every worker in the field of spirituality needs two things, attraction and work. He is attracted towards the higher regions and he has to work to reach the goal. Some are first attracted inwardly and then commence work. Others start work and find subsequently, that they are being attracted inwardly. In both the cases, however, one of the two predominates. Attraction is *jadhb* and the attracted is *majdhub*. Work is *suluk* and the one who works and keeps on moving forward is *salik*. So every practical student of Sufism is a *majdhub* and *salik* at the same time. The difference in names only signifies the predominance of one feature over the other. The one who is strong and steady in work and is not overcome by *jadhb* is called a *salik*; while the other who is weak and unsteady in work and is overpowered by *jadhb* is called *majdhub*. The response to *jadhb* in a *majdhub* is so great that he finds himself powerless to make further progress in his work. His senses are affected, his self control gone and not being able to move on, he remains stuck to the point where the overdose of *jadhb* overtook him.

A beginner, at a later stage, is met now and then by attractions in different forms. At this stage, he is called a *salik-majdhub*.

In a more advanced stage, he remains constantly surrounded by attractions of a superb nature, in a variety of conceivable and inconceivable forms and feeling and yet he does not allow himself to be deluded and overpowered by them and does not allow the consequent 'intoxication' to interfere with the necessary work. He is called a *majdhub-salik*. He is a man of very superior *sufi* and always rewarded with very high attainments.

The above description may help to throw some light on the real Sufi and his work and may dispel, to a certain extent, the mist that surrounds him. The poor Sufi has, unfortunately, been the victim of various attacks levelled against him from ill-informed quarters.

It is wrongly supposed that Sufism has nothing to do with Islam. In fact, it is the life and soul of Islam. It is really Islam in its higher and practical aspects. It is action and the consequent realisation. It is a process of purification of the soul. It is not an idle and

unproductive philosophy. It is not a set of fresh beliefs in any way different from the teachings of Islam. It is not a series of secretive teachings of any fantastic nature. It is work on proper lines and, as a result of such work and consequent purification of the soul, it is enlightenment and realisation. With this improved outlook, wider knowledge and better understanding, the Sufi becomes capable of higher flights and better comprehension of Islamic teachings; and his interpretation of Islam is necessarily more to the point. His interpretations are not properly understood by those who lack the proper insight. It usually happens that the Sufi finds it difficult to express himself in an ordinary language. The language of miscellaneous humanity is not coined to give expression to the higher subjects of Divine purity. He has therefore, to express himself in his own special language which can only be understood by those conversant with proper Sufism and for whom his writings are really meant. Limitation of language, sometimes compel him to use ordinary human expressions to indicate extraordinary discoveries in the domains of Divinity. For example, in the description of the diagram given before (Figure 1), the following expressions have been used:

> "...and, ultimately, you realise that at point B, you are in a comprehensible form from what you were at point A, an incomprehensible formlessness."

This very important part of the explanation of the diagram, is quite capable of misinterpretation and can never be understood correctly by those who are ignorant of the subject and who have not been personally through the *suluk*. Since most non-Sufis are not fully conversant with the expressions and language of the Sufis, the Sufistic writings are generally misunderstood and misinterpreted, not only by ordinary people, but by those who are learned in the subjects other than *tasawwuf*. On certain points, it is true, the Sufi arrives at results vastly differing from those arrived at by others. Such divergence is due, not to a differing source of information but to his cultivation of better powers of understanding and to the acquirement of greater light and wider horizon.

Sufism has generally been associated with renunciation of the world. In fact it is renunciation, but merely on a limited scale for a limited period, with a particular object in view; and this is what everyone does when he sets before him an object of somewhat difficult attainment. In that case, he has to devote his time and energy exclusively to the attainment of the object in view. A student has to leave his family and home; has to dissociate himself from interfering friends; has to isolate himself from other attractions; has to travel to a university town; and has to put himself in a boarding house. He has to lead a simple life and devote himself exclusively to his studies. When he finishes his university course and obtains his degree, he comes back to his home, family and friends and freely mixes with the world. It is the same with the Sufi. The Sufi's renunciation is not a total renunciation. It is not the renunciation of a Hindu Yogi, a Christian Monk, or Buddhist Lama; it is only a temporary renunciation, with the object of completing his most difficult spiritual course. After finishing his course, there is nothing to prevent him from coming back to the world with his light and culture to serve humanity. Accomplished Sufis do return to the world with a fresh

light and it is they who are referred to in the following passages of the Qur'an:

> "Shall he who hath been dead (having died the death of ignorance) and whom We have since restored unto life (of knowledge), and unto whom We have ordained a light whereby he moves about in the midst of people, be like him who is immersed in the darkness (of ignorance) and is determined not to come out of that darkness ?" [6:122]

To form a correct estimate of Sufism, one must look to the real *tasawwuf* , rather than to miscellaneous set of people pretending to be Sufis. A mere pretension is not guarantee of Sufism. Real Sufis of the best types have lately been few. The many pretenders infesting the various *durgahs*, *khanqahs*, and *zawiyas*, are either mere pretenders, or have gotten stranded in the way. Sometimes a genuine Sufi gets marooned in one of the intermediate stages in his course. A student of Sufism in an intermediate stage is like a house in the course of construction. Such a house can neither serve the purpose of an open space, nor supply accommodation to any one who wants to live in it. At present, it is of no use. It would be wrong for a student of the comparative study of religions to judge Islam by looking haphazardly at Muslims in streets, public houses, or jails; or to judge Christianity by looking at the daily growing crime in European countries. Similarly, proper Sufism is to be judged by the correct standard only, and not by what the wrong exponents of it declare it to be.

A closer knowledge of the subject will convince a discriminating observer that a Muslim Sufi is quite a different man from a Western Spiritualist. The Western Spiritualist has no faith to start with, no set of beliefs to guide him, and no fixed goal to direct his steps. His work is experimental throughout. Bred and brought up in an atmosphere of doubt and distrust, he starts with scepticism and winding his way through a long and circuitous route of doubts, delusions, experiments, surprises, and disappointments, he very often finds himself stranded in the midst of unexplored fields. He imposes upon himself a double duty. He is his own leader and his own follower. He does not want to be guided by the experience of others. With him, it is not a question of realisation, but of test. He has nothing to realise, because he has no faith to stand by. He has first to find out the truth and then test it.

His initial estrangement from spiritual subjects, makes him an easy prey to foreign influence. Some of the very ancient and antiquated Eastern religions, which have lost their original glamour and primitive glory, possess a novelty for him and attract him easily. The "Theory" of Reincarnation, the "Philosophy" of Karamma and other similar mutilations of ancient teaching, take possession of him and deviate him from his proper path. His materialistic tendencies clog his footsteps during his spiritual march and beset his progress at every turn. Development of will, concentration, and other spiritual powers, are readily employed by him to secure some brilliant worldly success. Any valuable information, obtained from a higher source, is willingly utilised for a materi-

alistic end. Higher attainments are ungrudgingly employed to secure lower ends. Instead of sacrificing the low for the high, he thoughtlessly rushes in the opposite direction and feels no compunction in sacrificing the high for the low; not knowing probably, the extent of damage he is thereby inflicting upon his own talents.

These earthly tendencies keep him earth-bound and, instead of moving on and fast, he finds himself entangled in the meshes of "communion with the dead", where he is very often baffled by the inconsistencies of the results. Having no proper standard of judgment, he cannot draw a correct line of distinction between the spirits belonging to this side of the grave and the spirits belonging to other side of it, and the result is a hopeless confusion. Table-turning, planchettes, telepathy, tele-'vision', and his similar other achievements only tend to tie him down to earth, instead of helping him to soar into the heavens of spirituality. Spiritualism in the West, has come to have quite a different meaning from the one indicated by the spiritualism of the Sufi.

The Sufi is a different man altogether. He starts with faith. He has certain established beliefs to urge him forward, an established goal to draw him on, and a personal guide to help him in his undertaking. He is in no danger of getting stranded anywhere. Many have gone the same way before him and many have worked likewise with unanimous results. His predecessors have marked the line of march for him and have left a series of shortcuts for his facility. He has to create no new theory, to establish no new truth, to formulate no new creed, and to unseal no forbidden knowledge. He does not stand in need of light from any foreign source, does not stand in need of new experiments, and does not require any old truth to be put to a new test. Everything for him is cut and dried. He has simply to realise, simply to taste the sweets ready in store for him. He never likes to deviate from the path ordained for him, never sacrifices the high for the low, never seeks to astound the world by his miracles or miraculous powers, and never loses sight of his ultimate Goal. The following words of the Holy Qur'an are ever before him:

> "Say, verily, my prayer, and my sacrifice, and my life, and my death, are for Allah, the Lord of the worlds." [6:162]

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The Kashful Mahjub

In the Name of Allah Most Gracious Most Merciful

Introduction

Lord God, we crave for Thy mercy and guidance onto the right path! All praise is for Allah who has revealed the mysteries of His soul worlds (*malakut*) to His friends (*auliya*) and unveiled the truths of His domains and of His attributes (*jabrut*) to His elite (*asfia*) and has killed His lovers with the sword of His Majesty (*Jalal*) and has made His intimates (*arifin*) taste the fruit of His union (*wisal*). It is He who rejuvenates the dead souls by brilliance of His eternal Glory (*samdiyat*) and His Majesty (*kibriyat*) and revives them by the spirit and influence of His good Names.

Blessings (*salawat*) of Allah be on the Holy Prophet Muhammad, his posterity (*aal*), his companions (*ashab*) and his wives.

O my friend, may Allah bless you, having cleared my mind of all motives, I, Ali bin Uthman al-Hujweri, may Allah be pleased with me, have prayed to the Almighty to bless me with the ability to fulfil your desire, by writing the required book. My prayer has been granted and I have decided to compile the book and entitle it *Kashful Mahjub* (which means "Unveiling the veiled"). Having understood the objective in your mind I have arranged the book in proper parts. I pray to the Almighty to grant me success and save me from attributing this work to myself, for I am quite certain that the ability to perform all deeds comes from the Lord Himself and no one else!

The Reason for Mentioning the Author's Name

I have mentioned my name in the text for two reasons. One is general and the other is particular. The general reason is that when the ignorant aspire for fame and find a book

without the author's name inserted on the text, they attribute it to themselves. I have had bitter experience of this forgery twice. Once, somebody borrowed my *Diwan* (Collection of poetical works) and, since I had retained no copy of it, he scored off my name and inserted his in the work. May God forgive him! On another occasion I compiled a book on Sufism entitled *Minhajuddin* (The Code of Religion) but a charlatan had the audacity to publish it under his own name, despite the fact that those who were conversant with the science laughed at him. The result was that the wretched man's name was obliterated from the list of lovers of the Divine Court.

The other reason is that when the refined people see a book with the author's name in it, they, knowing that he is competent to write, are motivated to read it more carefully and to derive greater benefits from it.

Importance of Praying *Istikhara*

Istikhara actually means a prayer for seeking God's blessing and protection in every affair. Says Allah in the Holy Qur'an, "When you recite the Qur'an, seek Allah's protection from the accursed Satan." [16:98]. So the terms *istikhara*, *istiaza* and *istiana* are synonymous and stand for seeking God's assistance and protection against all evil. The Holy Prophet (may peace be upon him) also used to lay equal stress on the teachings of the Qur'an and praying *istikhara*. When a man knows that his success does not depend on his own talents and merits, but is in the hands of the Almighty, and every good and evil is preordained, it is better to surrender everything to His will and seek His protection.

Commentary: Predestination and Free Will

The question of predestination and free will have always been a controversial issue in the history of not only Islam, but in all religions and communities, since the arguments on both sides are extremely subtle and almost beyond common understanding. In the Holy Qur'an there are some verses which support predestination and others which favour free will. The same is the case with the sayings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) which is the second source of dogmatic scholasticism in Islam. The reason for this dualism is that man also has a dual nature. Since he is the combination of body and soul which belong respectively to the physical world and the realm of Divinity, he lives simultaneously in the realm of Reality (*haqiqat*) or Transcendence and the realm of Phenomenon (*majaz*) or the realm of Descendence. The saints (*auliya*) of Islam, who have realised the truth and have actual experience of the oneness of the Divine Being, look upon the world both from the angle of reality and the angle of physicality. They are aware of the Divine Secrets and maintain that in the realm of *haqiqat* there is compulsion, and in the realm of *majaz* there is free will.

In other words, man is free to act to the extent the action is performed by the limited powers of his feeble physical existence, and is said to be under compulsion to the extent his actions take place by the force of power beyond his ability, termed as Divine Will. It therefore follows that man is between free will and compulsion termed in the orthodox theology as *Amrun bayn-al-Amrain* which means that the truth lies between free will and compulsion. When somebody asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq to clarify the position, he said, "*Mukhtarun fi fialihi wa majburun fi ikhtiarihi*", i.e. Man is free to do what he wills, but cannot will what he wills. This dualism in belief is the result of the dual nature of man by which he is at once a part of the physical world and the world of Divinity. *Haqiqat* and *Majaz* are two different states of being.

Confusion arises only when attempts are made to reconcile the essentially irreconcilable issues. To measure metaphysical heights with physical yardsticks is an exercise in futility. The questions of the realm of Divinity cannot be answered in the language of the realm of physicality. This complex question of predestination and free will can be understood by the following example. Suppose a person grows wheat and gets a good harvest and thanks God for it. Now somebody may ask him "You ploughed the field, you sowed the seeds, you watered the crop and got the harvest. It is you who produced wheat. What has God done to merit your gratitude?" The answer is: There is no doubt he ploughed the land, but who created the land? Who endowed it with fertility? It is true he sowed the seeds, but who created the seed with all its potentialities of growth and production? It is true he watered the crop, but who created water with all its potentialities of nourishment ? The answer is, it is God who created the earth, the seed and water; and it is the farmer who ploughed, sowed the seed, watered the crop and reaped the harvest. This shows it is neither the farmer alone, nor God alone who caused the crop to mature. It is both God and man who are responsible for it.

Curse Of Selfishness

When I said I had cleared my mind of all motives and then prayed *istikhara*, I did this because in being selfish one is deprived of God's blessings and is led astray. Selfishness brings two curses to a person. If he succeeds, it would be the success of the *nafs* (lower or beastly self) which is bound to bring destruction and land him in hell. If he fails, he also gains nothing. He should have abstained from it in the first place, as his failure is due to nothing but selfishness. And the key to Paradise is nothing but abstention. Says God in the holy Qur'an:

"Those who abstain from the cravings of *nafs* (beastly self) surely find their place in Paradise." [79:40-41]

Refraining from the cravings of nafs means, that whatever one does his motive should be nothing but pleasure of the Almighty, and the avoidance of Hell fire. In short there is no end to the machinations of the *nafs* which are indeed imperceptible. God willing, I am going to devote a separate chapter to it in this work.

Importance of Pure Intention

When I said that I accepted your invitation and made up my mind to complete the work, I realised that you considered me to be competent to accomplish it, and therefore I felt duty bound to do it. Man can only intend to do something and leave the result to God Almighty. If he fails, he is not to be blamed. For the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "Intention of the believer is better than actual completion." It is better to begin something with true motives than to complete it without any motive. Determination of correct motives is of tremendous importance in Islam, in that it leads to higher and higher objectives. For instance if a man abstains from food and drink with no intention of religious fasting, he is entitled to no reward (*thawab*). But if he intends to fast he becomes one of the inmates of Divine presence (*muqarribin*) although there is no apparent difference between the one who fasts with the intention of fasting and the one who fasts without it.

Similarly a person who goes to Mecca without the intention of visiting the Holy Shrine deserves no recompense, but if he has that intention and dies on the way before visiting it, he is rewarded immensely. This shows that the fixation of true motive in the beginning is tantamount to good performance itself.

Meaning of *Kashful Mahjub*

In naming the book *Kashful Mahjub* the object in my mind was that the name itself should be expressive enough to indicate the contents thereof. For, those whose inner eyes are open can easily understand from the title what the book is about.

Let it be understood that generally, people except the Friends of God, the Most High (*auliya-Allah*) and intimates of Divine Presence, lack knowledge of Divine mysteries. Since this book is an explanation of Divine Truth, Divine Secrets, and the unveiling of the Reality of human nature, no other name is suitable for it. As a matter of fact, *kashf* (Display of Truths) is injurious to those who are the *mahjub* (veiled) in the same manner as *hijab* (Concealment of Truths) is harmful for those who are born great.

Similarly, a person enjoying the state of nearness of the Lord cannot tolerate separation, nor can one who is separated bear the splendour of nearness. This is like a worm born in vinegar which dies when it falls into anything else, or one born in anything else which dies when it falls in vinegar. In other words an understanding of high truths is

difficult for those who are not born high. As has been said by the Prophet (s.a.w.): "Things are easy for those who are born for them." The Lord Most High has created everyone for some purpose, the achievement of which has been made easy for him.

Kinds of Veils

Veils are of two kinds, veils of "rust" which can never be removed and the veils of "dust" which can easily be removed. In other words men are of two kinds, some are veiled by nature (*dhat*, essence), and some by habits (*sifat*, attributes). The former suffer from the veil of permanence (*rein*) and are unable to distinguish right from wrong; while the later suffer from veils of *ghain* (dust) and are always in search of truth. The terms *rein*, *khatam* and *taba* are synonymous and are based on the Qur'anic verse:

"No! Their deeds have made their hearts rusty." [83:14]

This has been corroborated by another verse which says:

"Whether you warn the infidels or not, they shall not believe." [2:5]*

The reason given in the Qur'an is this:

"Allah has sealed their hearts." [2:6]

The veils of attributes, called *ghain* are capable of being removed sooner or later, but the veils of essence (nature) are eternal and unchangeable.

*__Commentary__: The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said in a Hadith, "If you tell me a mountain has moved from its place, I can believe it. If you say a tree has moved away, I can believe it. If you say somebody's nature has changed, I cannot believe it."

The *mashaikh* (or *auliya-Allah*) have expressed themselves on this question of *rein* and *ghain* in various artistic words. Says Junaid, "*Rein*, belongs to the category of lasting values (*watnat*), *ghain* to transitory (*khatrat*)." *Watan* (Lit: home land) is permanent and *khatar* (reverie) is transitory. For instance, it is not in the nature of a stone to become a mirror however hard you rub it. But the dust on the mirror can be removed. This is because darkness is the very nature of a stone, and light the very nature of a mirror. The essence is permanent, and the attributes transitory.

So the purpose of this book is to remove dust from the hearts of those in whose hearts the spark of light may be shadowed by the veils of *ghain*, to enable them to approach

God. But those in whose very nature denial is engraved, can never find their way to Divine Truth. Thanks be to the Almighty for the gift of gnosis!

When I said, "I know what you mean", I knew that unless one knows what is in the mind of the questioner, one cannot give him an adequate answer. Moreover, a questioner has full knowledge of his question and, therefore, it is easy to reply to him; whereas, in the case of a novice one has to go into lengthy details and definitions to make understanding easy for him. The ability (*taufiq*) to give correct answers is a gift of God.

I seek ability from Allah to write the book, because there is none except Him to help. When His help is forthcoming success is ensured. The doctrine of *Taufiq* has its origin in the Qur'an and the Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and the entire Muslim community except the Mu'tazilah and Qadriya is unanimous on it. The *mashaikh* of *tariqat* (i.e. Sufis) have defined *taufiq* thus, "*Taufiq* is redoubled in case of obedience to the Almighty." This means that when a man is obedient to God his ability for work is enhanced. To be brief, man's deeds of commission and omission are in reality the deeds of the Almighty, and his ability to act is called *taufiq*. It is out of place to elaborate it here. Indeed the power of *taufiq* vests with the Divine Lord.

The Questions

Abu Said Hujweri[1] has asked the following questions:

- What is the reality of *tasawwuf*? (Sufism)
- What are the various stages (stations or *maqamat*) of the Sufi path?
- What are the different schools of Sufi thought?
- What are the secrets of Sufism?
- What is the nature of Divine Love (*muhabbat*) and how does it affect the human heart?
- Why is *Haqiqat* (Truth of God) veiled from the intellect of mankind?
- Why is the lower self of man averse to Truth?

[1] Abu Said Hujweri was a student of Sufism, who belonged to the author's *silsila* and hometown.

- Why does the angelic self revel in it? And,
- What are the Sufi practices?

The Answers

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi al-Hujweri, may God have mercy on me, assert that this knowledge has gone out of fashion in this age of ours, particularly in this country; and the people are given to selfish pursuits, and are averse to the path of Truth. The *ulama* and the pretenders have adopted a version of Sufism which is contrary to its real shape. So come forward and gird your loins to embark upon the path of Truth which cannot be treaded except by the elite and the chosen people.

The rank and file of the present generation have contented themselves with the theory and are averse to practice; they make no effort to remove the obstacles standing in their path; they have given preference to blind conformity (*taqlid*) over search for Truth (*tahqiq*). The common people think that they know God, and the elite are content with the idea that they have love of the hereafter in their hearts, and call it the desire for a vision of God; this is wishful thinking which has taken hold of them. The pretenders have neglected all efforts towards a search for reality, and the *murids* (novices) who are sitting idle, think that they are engaged in contemplation (*mushahidah*).

It is a pity that books already written by me on the subject have been lost. Some charlatans have picked passages here and there to deceive the people and destroyed the rest of it out of malice and jealousy. There are others who copied them out but did not understand them. While there are others who have memorised them and claim that they are the masters of Sufism (*tariqat*) and Gnosis (*ma'rifat*) while they know nothing about it. The reason for this state of affairs is that the science of spirituality has become rare like red sulphur (*kibrat-e-ahmar*) which turns brass into gold. In short everyone is in search of medicine for his own ailment and nothing else. Someone has rightly said: "Everybody seeks medicine suitable to his disease. When the disease is simple, where is the necessity of searching rare pearls and musk to cure it." Knowledge of Reality (*haqiqat*) is a rare gift beyond the reach of petty minded people.

In the past too, ordinary people have been dealing with the books of *auliya-Allah* in the same manner. When these treasures of Divine secrets fell into the hands of such people, being ignorant of their worth and value, they sold them cheaply to cap makers for stuffing and to book binders for binding the dirty books containing dirty poetry of Abu Nawas and Jahiz. It was like a royal falcon which happened to fall on the cottage of an old woman who clipped its wings and threw it away. God has created us in an age in which lust (*hawa*) is termed as *shariat*, hankering after wealth and power (*jah* and *riasat*) as

dignity, knowledge (*izo ilm*), and ostentation (*riya*) as fear of God (*khasiat*), concealment of anger as tolerance (*hilm*), hostility as debate, impertinence and foolishness as vindication of dignity, hypocrisy as asceticism, shiftiness as obedience, aberration as gnosis, reveries as revelations, heresy as sainthood, disobedience as friendship, disbelief (*zandaqa*) as self-annihilation (*fana*), renunciation of *shariat* of the Prophet (s.a.w.) as *tariqat* (Sufism), and evil cooperation with the wicked people as politics. The result is that genuine people have become subservient to the wicked, in the same manner as the descendants of the Prophet (s.a.w.) were subjected to the overlordship of the descendants of Marwan (The Ummayyads). His Eminence, Shaikh Abu Bakr al-Wasiti has beautifully said, "We have been tortured by an era in which neither etiquettes of Islam are observed, nor are good manners of paganism or principles of chivalry in vogue."

Reality of the Phenomenal World

You should know (may God give you strength), that I find this universe the treasure house of Divine secrets; and created things an expression of subtleties of creation. Substances (*jawahir*), accidents (*aaradh;* plural of *ardh*), elements (*anasir*), bodies, shapes and forms are veils over Divine Oneness and can be termed as *shyrk* (Polytheism) the opposite of *tauhid* (Oneness of Being).

Commentary: Created things known as *ta'ayyunat* (limited beings) are veils to conceal Oneness of Being in the sense that when different kinds of pots are made out of clay, various forms appear and the substance clay disappears. Similarly when water is converted into ice, it is ice which is visible and water goes into concealment. Now, since the created things are the expression of Divine power, they have no separate being and are graded as Attributes of God. They are included in God's Being and have relative, imaginary or non-real existence. This is called *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*, which means God is in all and all is in God. The author comes out openly in favour of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* when he asserts that to believe that created things have existence separate from the Divine Being is *shyrk* (polytheism). The creed of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* stands confirmed by the Qur'an and Hadith as well. Says Allah in the Holy Qur'an:

"Wherever you turn there is the Face (essence or *dhat*) of Allah." [2:115]

He says:

"He is the First, He is the Last, He is the Manifest, He is the Hidden." [57:3]

There are several sayings of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) which support the creed of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud*. For instance, the Prophet while elaborating the above mentioned

verse of the Qur'an said:

"Allah is the First and there is nothing before Him, He is the Last and there is nothing after Him, He is the Manifest and there is nothing above Him, He is the Hidden and there is nothing beside Him."

He has also said in a Hadith that anything other than Allah is non-existent. In dogmatic theology (*ilm-al-kalam*) also, Allah has been defined as having no partner both in Essence and in Attributes. If it is said that the universe has existence other than God, it becomes a partner of God in the attributes of *wujud* (Being) which is *shyrk* (polytheism). Again, if it is said that the universe has existence separate from God, in that case too, the Divine Being gets limited because God is excluded from the universe, or the universe is excluded from the Divine Being. And to regard the Divine Being as limited is heresy in *shariat*. It therefore follows that the universe has no separate existence and is included in God's Being. This is *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* which is upheld by all the *auliya-Allah* and enlightened *ulama*, although it was ibn Arabi who expounded it more clearly and with greater force in later times.

It is true that opinion in the world of Islam is divided on this issue, and sharp controversy has been raging for all these centuries, but most people forget that it is the Christian and Hindu brand of *wahdat-ul-wujud*, called Pantheism which is criticised by a section of Muslim *ulama*, and not the true Islamic version. The difference between Islamic *wahdat-ul-wujud* and Pantheism is that while in Hindu and Christian Pantheism, God can descend in Rama, Krishna and Christ—in Islamic *wahdat-ul-wujud* the Divine Being, which is unlimited, cannot possibly be contained by limited human beings nor by other things such as statues and idols. To think that the infinite can be contained by the finite is logically inconsistent. Statue worship is as ridiculous as to ask the hands of John to give you something which has been refused by John himself, simply because a part (*juz*) cannot function as a whole (*kul*). This is the true Islamic version of *wahdat-ul-wujud* to which there can be no objection from the Islamic point of view.

So far as the alleged opposition of Hadhrat Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi to the creed of *wahdat-ul-wujud* vis-a-vis *wahdat-ush-shuhud* is concerned, close scrutiny of his *Maktubat* shows that the difference between *wahdat-ul-wujud* and *wahdat-ush-shuhud* is verbal, not real (*naza-i-lafzi* and not *naza-i-haqiqi*). This has been upheld by Shaikh Ahmad himself in his *Maktubat*, by Shah Waliullah in his *Maktub Madniya* and by Shaikh Ismail Shaheed in his *Abaqat*. It may be noted that both Shah Waliullah and Ismail Shaheed belong to the Sirhindi school of spiritual thought. For further details the attention of the reader is invited to my books entitled "Islamic Sufism", *Sharah Lawaih Jami* and *Risalah Wahdat-ul-Wujud* and *Wahdat-ush-shuhud*.

So this phenomenal world is the place of concealment (of God behind the veil of created beings). The advantage of this wisdom of God is that everybody feels satisfied in his own blindness (because, otherwise, constant vision of Divine Brilliance would have turned him mad). And the greatest veil between man and God is man himself.

Commentary: Says Jami, "Thy being is the veil...."

Human intellect is unable to comprehend Divine Truth and Divine Nearness because of man's physical nature and bodily self, and now everybody is groping in the dark, veiled as he is from God because of his phenomenal existence. It is this state of affairs which has been described by the Almighty in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"By nature man is in a state of disadvantage, except those who believe and do good deeds." [103:2-3]

[Because it is by virtue of belief in God and the Prophet (s.a.w.) and good deeds that the human soul is purified and is able to comprehend Divine Truth and is favoured with Divine Presence and Vision.] The verse, "Verily man is *zaluman jahula,*" [33:72], also points to the same truth.

Commentary: It is said in the Qur'an that Divine Trust (*amanat*) was offered to heaven and earth but they refused to accept it. It is **man** who accepted it because he is *zaluman jahula*, which the exoterics interpret as "cruel and ignorant", but is obviously wrong because man who accepted the Divine offer after it was rejected by the heavens (angels) and earth becomes worthy of commendation not condemnation. What the verse really means is that the angels could not accept the offer of vicegerency because they are pure light and are unable to reflect the Divine Attributes. The earth and mountains could not bear it because they are solid masses of matter and are unable to reflect the Divine Nature.

Since man is the combination of body and soul having one dark and the other bright side, he is capable of reflecting the Divine Nature or Divine Attributes to function as Vicegerent of God on earth. So, it is the dark bodily part of human nature which has been called *zaluman jahula* in the Qur'an because his physical side is dark like that of a mirror and **can** serve as a mirror to reflect or contain Divine Attributes of power and wisdom necessary to act as a vicegerent (*khalifah*) of God on earth.

So what the author of *Kashful Mahjub* means by quoting this verse is that essentially mankind has the disadvantage of the darkness of his bodily side, but has the

potentiality of light in him too. When he manages to get spiritual purification by virtue of belief in God and in the prophets and does good deeds, he develops inner sight, grows wings and reaches the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* (Union with God) where he assimilates Divine Attributes and realises the truth of the *Hadith al-Qudsi* (reported by Imam Bukhari) which says that in a state of intense nearness (*qurb* or absorption in Divine Being called *fana*) he sees by the sight of God, hears by the hearing of God, and does everything by God's power. And it is this stage of absolute *fana* both in Divine Attributes and Essence (*dhat-o-sifat*) which confers upon him the great title of Vicegerent of God on earth, because it is at this exalted stage of spiritual perfection that man can discharge his duties of *khalafat*, i.e., looking after the affairs of mankind and guiding people to spiritual nearness and union with the Divine Lord.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said: "God created the universe in darkness and then flashed His light over it." This shows that the veil is in the very nature of man because of the darkness of his bodily self and because of his intellect.

Commentary: Human intellect (*aql*) is considered to be a veil because it is through this power of reasoning that he finds himself bound in the shackles of time and space and cannot break them. It is after extreme purification (*tazkiah*) that he is finally able to extricate himself and soar unto the realms of Divinity.

That is why man has a natural inclination towards ignorance; is contented with the veils between the Divine Beloved and himself; is unaware of the beauty of *kashf* (illumination); is averse to plumb the mysteries of God; finds solace in separation from God; turns his back to salvation; misses the charms of oneness with the Divine Beloved; is unconscious of the fascinations of merging with the Indeterminate Being (*Ahadiyyat*); has no taste for the sweetness of unification (*tauhid*); lacks the experience of contemplation (*mushahidah*); his lust for wealth overpowers his love for God; he surrenders to the dictates of the beastly self, and remains deprived of spiritual bliss, and all his actions are directed towards beastly pursuits, having no occupation except eating, drinking, and satisfying sexual desires. It is these people that God has warned His friends against in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an:

"(O Prophet), leave them to their fate and let them eat, drink, and indulge in luxuries; they shall soon realise what they did." [15:3].

Overwhelmed by the beastly self they have lost sight of Divine mysteries (*Sirr-i-Haq*), and are faced with disaster and disappointment instead of grace and gifts from God Almighty. The result is that they succumb to the dictates of *nafs-i-ammarah* (the lower

self) which is the greatest veil between man and his Creator. Says Allah, the most High:

"Verily the animal self forces one to evil deeds."[12:53]

Commentary: The animal self has been termed as *nafs-i-ammarah* in the Holy Qur'an. God Almighty speaks of three kinds of *nafs*: *nafs-i-ammarah*, *nafs-i-lawwamah*, *nafs-i-mutma'innah*. *Nafs-i-ammarah* is the beastly self before purification, and always commands evil. When a certain amount of purification is ensured, the beastly self loses its force and is known as *nafs-i-lawwamah* (the blaming self) which, instead of commanding evil, starts blaming itself for evil deeds. When ultimately full purification (*tazkiah*) is effected, the lower self is completely subdued and is known as *nafs-i-mutma'innah* (the peaceful self). In that stage the seeker is free from all worries as he enjoys the state of union (oneness) with Divine Beloved.

Now I will proceed to explain to you the various "stages" (*maqamat*) of the spiritual journey and different kinds of veils, by quoting the specialists in Sufi technology and citing examples and anecdotes of Sufi shaikhs, to facilitate understanding. Moreover the exoteric scholars and others will also realise thereby that the Sufi doctrine has sound footings and fruitful results. It goes without saying that all the Sufi shaikhs have been profound scholars in Islamic learning, skilled in the art of training the *murids* (disciples), and enhancing their thirst for higher truths. These were the people who were never given to lust or frivolity. And most of them are authors of splendid works on Sufism which are the result of Divine Inspiration. And the ability (*taufiq*) to work springs from Divine help.

CHAPTER ONE

The Importance of Knowledge in Islam

God Almighty has praised the *ulama* in the following words:

"Of all the servants of God only the *ulama* fear Him most." [35:25]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) says, "The search for knowledge is obligatory for all Muslim men and women." He also says, "Seek knowledge even if it is in China[1]." You should know that knowledge is boundless and life is short. It is therefore not incumbent on man to perfect all branches of learning such as astronomy, medicine, mathematics and other sciences except to the extent necessitated by *shariat*. For instance man has to learn that much of astronomy which enables him to determine the time (of prayer) by stars in the night; of medicine to preserve health, and of mathematics to calculate share of inheritance and *iddat* (duration of the period of divorce and menstruation). The conditions (*fraiz*) of knowledge are determined by their utility to act rightly. God Almighty has deprecated the sort of knowledge which is harmful and useless. Says He: "They teach what is harmful and useless" [2:102]. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "I seek God's protection against useless knowledge."

You should know that one can achieve great success through a little knowledge. But knowledge should always be followed by practice. For the Prophet (s.a.w.) has condemned knowledge without good deeds in the following words, "The worshipper without the

[1] China being the most distant land from Arabia

knowledge of *fiqh* (Islamic law) is like the donkey driving a flour mill, which is at the same place in the evening where it started work in the morning."

I know a section of people who give preference to knowledge over action and a section who prefer action over knowledge. I consider both of them wrong. To me action without knowledge is no action as it has no logical foundation and does not warrant reward (*thawab*). Take prayer (*salat*) for instance; prayer is not prayer unless one who prays has knowledge of the rules of purification (*taharat*), of *qiblat* (the shrine at Makkah), of intention (*niyyat*) and the principles of praying. So, when action without knowledge is no action, how can you separate them from each other? It is equally inconsistent to prefer knowledge over action, as knowledge without action is no knowledge. Says Allah Almighty, " Those who ignore the commands of the Book revealed to them are like those who are ignorant." This is a clear condemnation of those who have knowledge but do not act upon it. For, learning, remembering, and so on, also fall in the category of *mu'amilat* and one is entitled to be rewarded for it. But if knowledge is not acted upon, it goes without reward (*thawab*) in the hereafter. So the net result is that both of these sects are wrong. One regards knowledge as the source of worldly position, and is, therefore, ignorant of the importance and reality of both knowledge and action. To them theory (*kal*) is nothing, practice is everything. To the other, practice is nothing, theory is everything.

Khawaja Ibrahim bin Adham (r.a.) says, "I came across a stone on which the following words were written: 'Turn me over and read.' I turned the stone and saw the following words written there: 'You did not act upon what you know, so how can you aspire for what you have no knowledge of ?' " It means that knowledge is a prerequisite for action, and opens the avenues of further illuminations.

Anas bin Malik (r.a.) says, "The aim of the *ulama* is to understand and of fools to quote." The *ulama* are distinguished from the ignorant by virtue of some signs. One of the signs of the ignorant is that they seek knowledge for worldly fame. This is not knowledge. It is ignorance. In short, the greatest virtue of knowledge is Truth of God and all the stages and states of nearness of God can be attained only through knowledge.

Kinds of Knowledge

There are two kinds of knowledge. Knowledge of the Creator and knowledge of the creature (man). The knowledge of man is totally inconsequential as compared with the knowledge of God. For God's knowledge is His eternal Attribute, which is limitless like the rest of His Attributes; while our knowledge is our attribute and our attributes are limited. The Almighty has also said:

"The knowledge vouchsafed to man is very little." [17:85].

Divine Knowledge

Briefly speaking, knowledge is a good attribute and is the full understanding and explanation of one who is known (*ma'lum*). The best quality of knowledge is this: That it turns the ignorant into the wise. Says the Qur'an, "Allah's knowledge encompasses the infidels." [2:95]. He has also said, "Allah knows everything." [31:34]. God's knowledge comprehends everything existent or non-existent, and there is none to share that knowledge. It is neither divisible nor separable from Him. And the proof of His knowledge is the incidence of His action, because action necessitates knowledge on the part of the actor. Divine knowledge embraces everything hidden and manifest. The seeker should believe that God sees whatever he does and nothing escapes Him. This is evident from the story of the rich man who went to his garden and saw the beautiful wife of his gardener sitting with her husband. He managed to send the husband away on some pretext and told the woman to close all doors. She said, "I have closed all doors except one which I cannot close." "Which one?" asked he. "The one between us and our Lord," she replied. As soon as he got this reply, he felt ashamed and prayed to the Almighty for forgiveness.

Hatim Asam has said, "Ever since I started to act upon the knowledge of four principles, I got rid of all knowledge in the world." When asked what those principles were, he said, "One is when I know for certain that what I am destined to get can neither be increased or decreased by my desire to get more, I feel satisfied. Secondly, I know that I have a duty to God which cannot be discharged by anyone except me and therefore I set about it. Thirdly I know that I cannot escape death. Fourthly, when I know that whatever I do never escapes the sight of my Lord, I refrain from all evil deeds, since when the servant of God knows that He is aware of everything, he abstains from evil deeds for fear of punishment in the hereafter."

Man's Knowledge

Man's duty is to have knowledge of God. i.e. the knowledge of His Commands and of His Essence and Attributes known as *ma'rifat* (gnosis). He should be able to understand the nature of his spiritual states (called *waqt*).

Ma'rifat is divided into two parts, inner (*usul*) and outer (*furu'a'*). Again *usul* (inner *ma'rifat*) has an inward (*batin*) and outward side (*zahir*). The outward consists of Theory (*Qaul-i-shahadat*), and the inward is actual experience (*Tahqiq-i-ma'rifat*). *Furu'a'* also has two aspects: *zahir* (outward) and *batin* (inward). The outer side of *Furu'a* is rituals and public dealings, and the inner side is purification of intention (*niyyat*). Both the *zahir* and *batin* are interdependent. *Zahir* without *batin* is hypocrisy (*nifaq*) and *batin*

without *zahir* is heresy (*zundqah*). Outward *shariat* without inner experience (*hal*) is imperfection (*naqs*). And *batin* without *zahir* is lust (*hawa*).

Commentary: *Waqt* in Sufi terminology stands for the inner spiritual states. This terminology is based on the Hadith, *"Li ma'Allah–i–waqt "* (I am in a state of nearness [or *qurb*] with God which no prophets or angel has experienced.)

Constituents of *Ma'rifat* (*Batin* of Islam)

Ma'rifat consists of three pillars (*arkan*): Firstly, the knowledge of Divine Essence (*dhat*) and His Oneness (*wahdaniyat*) including negation of duality; secondly, knowledge of Divine Attributes (*sifat*); thirdly, the Commands of God (*ahkam*) and the wisdom (*hikmah*) thereof.

Constituents of *Shariat* (*Zahir* of Islam)

Shariat also consist of three pillars, the Qur'an, the Sunnah of the Prophet (s.a.w.) and the consensus (*ijma*) of the Muslim *ummah*. The necessity of the knowledge of Divine Essence, Divine Attributes, and Divine Commands has been stressed by the following verses.

1. "Know that there is no god except God." [47:19]

2. "Know that Allah is your Lord (*Maula*)." [8:40]

3. "Do you not see how Allah has extended His Shadow." [25:45]

4. "Do they not see the camel and how it is made?"[88:17]

All these and many other verses bear testimony to God's actions which spring from His Attributes. Moreover the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"Hell fire is not allowed to touch the flesh and blood of one who affirms that Allah is his Lord and I am His Prophet."

Knowledge of The Essence of God

The Knowledge of Essence (*dhat*) of God consists of the following:

1. On reaching the age of puberty (*baligh*), man is duty bound to affirm that God has

existed by Himself since Eternity (*qidam*); that He is limitless and knows no boundaries; that He cannot be contained by any space (*makan*) and is all encompassing; that He is not the source of evil.

2. Nothing is like Him. Wife and children He has not. He is the Creator of not only man but of his ideas and actions too. Says the Holy Qur'an:

"Nothing is like unto Him." [112:4]

This is knowledge about His Essence in brief.

Knowledge of *Sifat* (Attributes)

It is also necessary in Islam to believe that God has Attributes which exist by Him, but are neither Him nor a part of Him. He had these Attributes since eternity (*azal*) and will have them up to eternity (*abad*). These are Knowledge (*ilm*), Power (*qudrat*), Existence (*hayat*), Will (*iradat*), Hearing (*sama'*), Seeing (*basr*), Speech (*kalam*) and Everlastingness (*baqa*).

These attributes are based on the following verses.

1. "Verily He knows what is in your mind." [67:13]
2. "Allah has the power to do what He wills." [2:284]
3. "He is all hearing and seeing." [6:13]
4. "He does what He intends to do." [85:16]
5. "He exists and nothing but Him exists." [40:65]
6. "He is the Truth and His is the Universe." [6:73]

Knowledge of Divine Deeds (*Af'al*)

Knowledge of Divine Deeds involves belief in the fact that He is the Creator of all beings and their actions (effects) as said in the Holy Qur'an: "Allah has created you and your actions." The non-existent universe has come into being through His Action. He is the Creator of Good and Evil, and what is beneficial and harmful. Says He: "Allah is the Creator of everything".

Knowledge of *Shariat*

The knowledge of *shariat* (law) demands belief in the fact that God has sent all His Prophets to mankind with supernatural powers (*mu'jizat*); and that our Prophet Muhammad (peace be upon him) is the true Prophet of God; that he also had supernatural powers; that whatever he has said about the Hidden and the Manifest is true. The first pillar of *Shariat* is the Holy Book (Qur'an) as testified in the verse: "This is the book containing immutable Laws." Another pillar of the *shariat* is the *Sunnah* (Tradition) of the Prophet (s.a.w.) as verified in the following verse, "Whatever is enjoined by the Prophet, accept it, and whatever is forbidden by him give it up."

Knowledge of Consensus

Knowledge of consensus (*ijma*) has been confirmed by the following Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.): "My *ummah* cannot be unanimous on falsehood. So you are duty bound to join the largest sect of Islam."

Commentary: The largest sect in the Muslim *ummah* is the *Ahl-i-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* and the smaller sects *Ahl-i-Hadith* or *Ghair Muqallids*, the Shias etc. have been commanded by this Hadith to join the *Ahl-i-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah*. It is gratifying to see that the Brailvis and Deobandis are already in *Ahl-i-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah*, therefore their dissensions are beyond understanding.

In short, so far as the commands about Divine secrets are concerned they are many, and it is not possible to collect them. They are limitless.

The Philosophers

There is a sect of heretics among the Muslims which is called *Sufistaiyan*. They maintain that knowledge itself does not exist, and therefore knowledge of anything is unnecessary. I pose this question to them: Is this belief of yours, that knowledge does not exist, correct or not? If they say yes, then I say knowledge does exist. If they say no, well, their knowledge about the non-existence of knowledge is an absurdity. Why do they oppose a thing (knowledge) which, according to them, does not exist? Is it not foolishness on their part to talk about a thing which does not exist?

Commentary: Imam Ghazali has challenged these philosophers in his book *Tahafat-al-Falasafa (Incoherence of philosophers)*. Arberry says that by writing this book Ghazali has acted like "Executioner-in-chief" and finished the philosophers of Islam for all times to come.

There is another sect, professing Sufism, which does believe in knowledge, but is of the opinion that since we are unable to know things fully, it is better to give up rather than take up the pursuit of knowledge. This also is sheer stupidity and ignorance. For renunciation of knowledge has two possibilities; it is either the result of knowledge or of ignorance. But knowledge cannot be negated by knowledge. Now, the only possibility left is that knowledge can be negated by ignorance which is again absurd, and borders on heresy. For, truth is diametrically opposed to ignorance.

All the Sufi shaikhs are opposed to this way of thinking. But it is a pity that when the common people heard these allegations against the Sufis they believed them to be correct, and began to doubt the genuineness of the shaikhs. I leave the mischief mongers to God Almighty as they remain in heresy. If people had the courage to challenge these philosophers and had not been lenient to them, things would have taken a turn for the better, and the Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) would have been spared. This would have been better for the people themselves or if the philosophers had tried to understand the Sufis, they would certainly have perceived the beauty of their high status and refrained from vilifying them, and lived a happy life, because vilification of the Friends of God is fraught with maladies and dangers. It was certainly wrong on their part to indulge in a campaign of vilification, and let loose the flood gates of sarcasm and ridicule on the revered shaikhs.

I once happened to come across a pretender who had given his arrogance the name of love for knowledge, his obedience to lust, the name of obedience to the Prophet (s.a.w.), and his surrender to the devil, the name of surrender to the Divine. During the course of the discussion, he said, "There are twelve sects of heretics of which one is that of the Sufis." I said, "Well, if one sect relates to us, the remaining eleven relates to you, and we can save ourselves from one (obnoxious) sect better than you can save yourself from eleven."

As a matter of fact all this degeneration is the result of retrogression of the age; but God Most Gracious has always kept His friends hidden and immune from dangers. As Shaikh Ali bin Bunda Sairafi (may God be pleased with him) has beautifully put it, "Deterioration of the hearts of man is proportionate to the deterioration of the age."

Now I will quote some of the sayings of the shaikhs of Islam which may serve as a warning to the opponents of the Sufi sect through God's Mercy. Mind you all *taufiq* (ability to guide) comes from God Almighty Himself.

Sayings of the Saints of Islam about Knowledge

Says Muhammad Fadhl al-Balkhi (r.a.); "The kinds of knowledge are three: *Ilm min-Allah* (Knowledge from God), *Ilm ma'a Allah* (Knowledge with God), and *Ilm bi-Allah*

(Knowledge of God). Knowledge of God is gnosis (Cognition) whereby the prophets and saints recognise God. Since He is beyond all description and explanation human intellect is incapable of knowing Him except through His Grace. *Ilm min-Allah* (Knowledge from God) is the knowledge conferred by *shariat* which is binding upon all men. And *Ilm ma'a Allah* (Knowledge with God) is the knowledge of the journey to God and of all the stages and stations thereof, including the states and status of *auliya-Allah*. This shows *ma'rifat* is not possible without *shariat* and *shariat* cannot be said to have been followed properly if it does not result in *ma'rifat*.

Commentary: The word *ma'rifat* (recognition of God) has special significance. It is used only when you see a person for the second time and remember that you had met him before. Since the origin of man is Godhead, the word recognition is most appropriate for meeting Him again.

Abu Ali Thaqfi (r.a.) says, "Knowledge ensures the safety of the *qalb* (soul) from the death of ignorance, and the light of eyes from darkness of heresy." He who lacks the knowledge of *shariat* suffers from the disease of ignorance which is the death of the soul, and therefore the infidels are called dead (in the Holy Qur'an). Similarly the hearts of the *ghafilin (*lethargic), are diseased through lacks of knowledge of *shariat*.

Commentary: *Qalb* in Sufi terminology stands for *Latifa-i-Qalb* of which we will talk on later.

Abu Bakr Warraq Tirmidhi (r.a.) says "He who is contented with dogmatic theology (*ilm–al–kalam*) without practising *zuhd* (piety and asceticism) is a heretic; and he who is contented with *fiqh* (Law of *shariat*) without struggling for purification is astray."

Commentary: This saying is similar to Imam Malik's saying: "*Man Tasawwafa wa la Tafaqaha Tazandaqah; man tafaqahah wa la Tasawwafa Tafasaqa; man jamaa baina huma Tahaqqaqa,"* i.e. One who learns Sufism without *fiqh* (*shariat*) becomes a heretic; one who learns *fiqh* without Sufism goes astray; and one who combines the two (Sufism and *fiqh*) reaches the Truth.

This is tantamount to the belief that attainment of the stage of unification (oneness) with the Divine Being is predestined (*jabr*) but it is not correct since a *muwahhid* (unified person) is both *qadari* and *jabari*. He is *jabari* in theory and *qadari* (believing in free-will) in practice. That is to say, he follows the middle of the road. Abu Bakr Warraq

(r.a.) has also said, "*Tauhid* (oneness) is below *jabr* and above *qadr*." Therefore one who adopts Sufism in theory and ignores practice, falls an easy prey to heresy, and one who indulges in practice without knowledge of *fiqh* (law of *shariat*) easily goes astray, since without the light of *shariat* he is caught up in the labyrinth of doubts and misgivings.

Shaikh al-mashaikh (guide of the guide) Yahya Muadh Razi (r.a.) has said, "Abstain from the company of three categories of people: heedless ulama (*ulama al-ghafilin*), flattering dervishes (*Fuqar* al-madahin*) and pretentious (ignorant) Sufis."

***Commentary:** Some prints of the Lahore edition have this word as *fuqara* and some as *qura*. The former means dervish and the latter reciter of the Qur'an. Since the word *fuqara* (singular *faqir*) has its origin in the Hadith, "The best *amir* (rich) is he who is at the door of a *faqir* (poor) and the worst *faqir* is he who is at the door of an *amir*." I have accepted the term *fuqara* instead of *qura*.

The heedless *ulama* are those who are in the habit of worshipping wealth, sluggish in observing the commands of *shariat*, flattering kings and dignitaries, taking pride in worldly grandeur, nursing their arrogance and pride in their intellectual attainments, praising their own power of eloquence, and condemning the *imams* and leaders of men, tormenting the genuine savants by actions and words and valuing jealousy and maligning religious virtues. This is not knowledge.

The flattering dervishes are those who are full of praise for people who satisfy their lust, and malign those who oppose them even if their opposition is justified. They are fond of status and mislead those who trust them.

The ignorant Sufis are those who pose to be great saints without having enjoyed the company of any spiritual guide and without having gone through the rigours of spiritual training. They glorify themselves by wearing splendid cloaks in a saintly manner and do not care even if people laugh at them. These simpletons cannot distinguish good from evil and try to fool others, not knowing that they befool themselves. Consequently Shaikh Yahya Muadh Razi (r.a.) has warned his *murids* (disciples) and others about the machinations of these three classes of people so as not to be deceived by them.

Shaikh Abu Yazid Bistami says, "I struggled hard for spiritual perfection for thirty years and did not find anything more difficult than knowledge and practice in accordance with it." In brief it is easier to walk on fire than to act in accordance with the dictates of knowledge. It is a thousand times safer for an ignorant person to cross the bridge (*Sirat-al-mustaqim*) than to learn a single item of knowledge. Similarly, it is much easier for a sinner to rest in hell fire than to carry out a solitary injunction of knowledge. It is therefore incumbent upon you to get knowledge, and attain perfection. Mind you,

perfection of knowledge is really ignorance so far as the knowledge of God is concerned. For the more you know, the more it dawns on you that you do not know.[1] Knowledge is necessary because it is difficult to serve (worship) God without knowledge. And service (worship) is the great veil between man and God.[2]

Commentary:

Note[1]: The sages have said; *"Ain qadar danistan kih haich na danistam"* (I know this much: that I do not know anything).

Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq (r.a.) has said: *"Al ijzo undark al idrak-e-idrakun."* (Confession of the inability to comprehend God is comprehension.)

Note[2]: This is because worship demands duality and duality is separation. It is when duality vanishes, that oneness with the Divine Beloved is achieved.

Someone has said: "`Confession of the inability to comprehend (God) is comprehension, and persistence in the way of the religious (*akhyar*), i.e. the way of worship, is polytheism." Worship is polytheism in the realm of *haqiqat* , i.e. state of oneness with God, because worship demands duality which is *shyrk* (polytheism) because it establishes multiplicity of being. But so long as we live in the phenomenal world in the state of duality and multiplicity, worship is not polytheism. It is Islam. So in the phenomenal world, one who has no knowledge and persist in ignorance is liable to become a polytheist. But when he gets knowledge, it dawns upon him that his knowledge is really ignorance. And thus arrogance is replaced by humility (*ijz*) or inability to comprehend God. Universal truths (*taslimat* or *musallimat*) do not change by a change in the nomenclature. And this inability on his part to know (comprehend God) turns into ability to know Him as said by Hadhrat Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (r.a.): "Profession of inability to know knowledge is reality."

CHAPTER TWO

Dervishhood (*Faqr*)

Know that Dervishhood (*faqr*) is an extremely exalted state in the way of God Almighty, and dervishes are men of high rank. Says God, The Most Exalted: "Charity is for those who take to contentment for God's sake and cannot get about in the world (being too busy in remembering God) but those who are unaware of their cult, imagine that they are rich." [2:273].

Commentary: Nicholson has translated *faqr* as "poverty" which is the literal meaning of the word, whereas in the language of Sufism it stands for being rich with God, known as *istighna*. A near substitute of this word in English is "asceticism" which is the life of complete trust (*tawakkal*) in God and non-dependence on anything other than God. But actually in Islam, asceticism or renunciation is purely spiritual or mental, not physical, which means that an ascetic of Islam need not renounce the world and sit in seclusion for good. What the Muslim ascetics do is that they live in the world, attend to its affairs, earn a livelihood, having full trust in God and believing that it is not their efforts which bring them bread, but it is through God's grace and kindness that they get what they get. In other words their *tawakkal* (trust in God), or renunciation is really mental or spiritual not physical, for physically they are men of the world and do not run away from its duties, pains and sorrows unlike the ascetics of other religions who do not face the world and take to seclusion for good.

So in Sufism *faqr* does not means poverty. It means wealth and abundance, because a *faqir* in the real sense, is an extremely rich person who lives on spiritual and

not physical wealth. That is why the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, *"Faqr* is my *Fakhr* (pride)." Persian poetry is very rich on the subject.

One of the saints of Islam has said: "I am the monarch of the domain of *faqr* enjoying the fruits of *fana* (self- negation). I am the *ghazal* (deer) of the realm of Divinity, free from 'otherness' (anything other than God)."

It is also said in the Qur'an: "Allah cites the examples of two persons one of whom is a slave of somebody and is not free to act, and the other is a slave to God who also does not work but gets his livelihood from Him."[16:75]. Again God says: "They are the people who keep their bodies separate from beds (in the night being absorbed in worship) and call upon God alone for help and sustenance." [32:16]. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "O Lord, let us live independently, die independently and rise in the hereafter among the independent." There are numerous verses like these which are not reproduced as they are too well known. Independent here means one who does not depend on anybody except God. During the time of the Prophet (s.a.w.), the *fuqara* (non-owners) were the *muhajirin* (the refugees from Makkah) who sat in the mosque and devoted themselves to the service (*ubudiyat*) of the Almighty, and companionship of the Prophet (s.a.w.), doing nothing to earn their livelihood, for they had full trust in God. It is for this reason that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was once reproached by the Almighty in the following words, "Do not refrain from those who are busy in remembering God day in and day out, and covet naught save His Beauty." [6:52]. Again He said, "Do not turn your eyes from them. Do you want worldly grandeur?" [18:28]. It is for this reason that the Prophet (s.a.w.) used to say to them, "By my father and mother ! It was for their sake that my Lord reproached me." This shows that the *faqir* is held in great esteem by the Almighty, and dervishhood is a great honour, honour of giving up all the outward and hidden sources of provision and placing full trust on the Provider Himself. Thus, *faqr* (poverty) turns into *fakhr* (pride), and the ascetics feel grieved to lose it and are jubilant when they attain it. They love it fervently and look down upon everything else in deep contempt.

Asceticism has two aspects (*alamat*): Outer and inner. Its outer aspect is poverty and privation, and the inner aspect is command and honour. One who dwells in the outer region is in a state of penury and as soon as he becomes rich he gets deprived of the Truth (*haqiqat*). But one who realises Truth turns his back on everything other than the Lord, and having attained absolute *fana* (Oneness) in the Divine Being he reaches the stage of *baqa* (everlasting life) in the Everlasting Being.

Commentary: Here Nicholson and most of the Urdu translators miss the mark. *Fana* is the state of oneness (unity) with the Divine Being. When *fana* is complete, the seeker (*salik*) imbibes or is endowed with Divine Attributes in terms of Hadith Qudsi (recorded by Bukhari and all other six authentic books): "I get so close to

him that he sees by Me, hears by Me, acts by Me, and walks by My power" and the Hadith: *"Takhallaqoo bi akhlaq-i-Allah"* (imbibe Divine Attributes). Now this fact of being attributed with Divine Attributes confers on the seeker the degree of *Baqa-bi-Allah* (abiding by God) and entitles him to be the vicegerent of God (*khalifatul-Allah*) on earth, which is the greatest achievement and highest goal in Islam. Incidentally, the exoteric Muslim scholars who indulge in the slogans of "Restoration of *Khalafat-i-Ilahia*", do not know what *Khalafat-i-Ilahia* really means and how it is achieved.

Khawaja Fudhail ibn Ayadh has said: "If one is rich he is rich at his own expense. For, if he is rich outwardly, he is poor inwardly." Some "progressives" complain that asceticism of the Sufis is the real cause of the downfall of Muslim in the world. But history has proved just the opposite. Did the magnificent Muslim empires like the Abbasids in Baghdad, the Ummayyads in Damascus and Spain, the Mughals in India and the Ottomans in Turkey degenerate due to want or wealth? Why did Hadhrat Umar shed tears when Madinah was virtually inundated by gold and silver on the arrival of the huge stores of booty from Iran? When somebody asked him the reason, he said, "I see the downfall of the Muslims in this wealth." And what he said did come true. Why does Islam envisage the liquidation of capitalism by means of the four big hammers: prohibition of usury, law of inheritance, *zakat* and voluntary charity (*sadaqat*)? It is because hoarding of wealth brings destruction in the long run. History tells us that nation remains great as long as they retain the virtues of simplicity, frugality, and contentment, and go astray when they indulge in luxuries. This is also the case of the Muslim who fought bravely and sacrificed everything for Islam when they were poor, but as soon as they got steeped in wealth they lost those sterling qualities and fell victims to imperialism. Take the case of the big modern nations who are fighting among themselves for wealth and glory.

A shaikh has said, "One who does not know dervishhood except in *rasm* (form) knows nothing of it except in *ism* (name). So an ascetic is one who possesses nothing and loses nothing (is not worried). He is neither rich in abundance nor poor in poverty. Wealth and want to do not make any difference to him. In fact he is happier in want. For, the *mashaikh* have said, "The more a Dervish suffers, the higher he flies." This is because abundance is a curse for him. The more he possesses the more he is possessed. So the friend of God (*dostan-i-Haq*) flourishes in spiritual wealth and Divine Secrets better than in this wretched world infested by sinners. For it is abundance which prevents attendance on the Divine Beloved.

Once a king said to a dervish, "Make any request and it will be granted." "I do not beg anything from one who is the slave of my slaves", he replied. The king asked, "How is it so?" He said, "My slaves are greed and lust and thou art the slave of both." The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "Poverty is an honour only for the honourable" It therefore follows,

that what is an honour to the honourable is a disgrace to one who is not honourable (*na ahl*). Honour of the ascetic is vindicated when his limbs are far from committing sin, and his heart is far from being disturbed. Neither his physical self bears any sign of disgrace nor is his soul affected by misfortune and worries. Outwardly he is absorbed in gratitude as much as his inward (inner self) is sunk in divine blessings, so that his lower self is finally transformed into the angelic self and his soul is rendered Divine. In that exalted position, nothing in the universe can match his greatness nor can any human being stand in comparison with him. For, neither does worldly poverty make him poor, nor does worldly possession make him rich. The whole universe does not weigh as much as a mosquito's wing in the scale of his poverty (*faqr*); he becomes so great that the whole universe fails to contain him!

Commentary: It is said by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) about the greatness of man: "Allah says I can neither be contained by my earth nor by my skies, but I can be contained by the *qalb* (soul) of a *mu'min* (true believer)." Another Hadith says, "The *qalb* (soul) of the *mu'min* is the abode (*arsh*) of the Lord." The Qur'an is equally eloquent about man's greatness. God says in a verse, "I blew out of My soul into man." [15:29]. This shows man's soul is really an offshoot or an offspring of the Divine Soul. Another verse says, "But you do not look into yourself for Me." Yet another verse says, "I am nearer to man than his jugular vein." [50:16]. What does it signify? It means that by merging his soul, or to say it more accurately, by negating his self the seeker becomes one with the Infinite Being and therefore cannot be contained by the universe. This should not give the impression that like Christian and Hindu belief, man becomes God. He does not become God. What happens is that man is lost in Godhead (*dhat)* and nothing remains except Him. The drop vanishes and the ocean remains. *"Ana'l Haq"* of Hallaj only meant this. It was Allah not Hallaj who said *"Ana'l Haq."*

Controversy about *Faqr* and *Ghina* (Poverty and Richness)

Opinions of the *mashaikh* of Islam are divided on the question of *faqr* (non-ownership) or *ghina* (ownership) as to which is superior. Now, since the real *ghani* (rich) is God Almighty Himself and all the attributes of perfection are His, Shaikh Yahya bin Muadh Razi, Ahmad bin Hawari, Harith al-Muhasibi, Abul Abbas bin Ata, Ruwaym and Abul Hasan bin Shamaun out of the *Mutaqaddimin* (earlier) and Shaikh al-Mashaikh Abu Saeed Abul Khair Mehni etc. belonging to the *Muta'akhirin* (Sufis of the later age) are of the opinion that ownership (richness) is better than non-ownership (poverty). They argue that, since richness (*ghina*) is a Divine Attribute and is above *faqr*, this quality (Attribute) if it is gained by man must of necessity be superior. My reply to this statement is that the human attribute of ownership is common with the Divine Attribute of ownership only in name and not in reality. Since human attributes are mortal and Divine

eternal, there is no question of human and Divine Attributes being common or equal. I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi assert that since *ghina* is a Divine attribute it cannot be applied to man; and since *faqr* is a human quality it cannot be applied to God. One who is called owner (*ghani*) in *majaz* (verbal sense) is not an owner in reality (*haqiqat*). Another proof clearer than the above is that man is subservient to causes in the case of ownership. Since God is the producer of causes, His *ghina* is not subject to any cause. It is, therefore, futile to think that man has attributes common with God. Moreover, when there is no *sharik* (partner) in Divine Essence, how can there be a *sharik* in Divine Attributes.

Commentary: God's attributes of *ghina* is one of those attributes which cannot be shared by man, whereas there are some attributes which are common between God and man although man has them in a much lesser degree, for instance hearing, seeing, power, etc. But the *auliya-Allah* are unanimous in saying that the attribute of *ghina* which really means self sufficiency or non-dependence on others is purely a Divine quality which cannot be shared by man, may he be a saint or a prophet, since everybody is dependent on one thing or another, but God is not. He is all Powerful and Omnipotent and needs no help from any source.

Now, when partnership is invalid in attributes, it is invalid in names too. When you say that someone is *ghani*, it is only a formality. So God is *ghani* in the sense that He is Self-sufficient and does not depend on anything else. He does what He Wills. There is none who can oppose Him or challenge His authority. All powers of progression and regression vest with Him and He can make the two opposites (*ziddain*) meet. He has always been so and will always be. But compared with this, man's *ghina* (independence) is based either on some success in life, example security from danger or happiness of *mushahidah* (vision of Divine Beauty) all of which are relative and are subject to deterioration, regression and disappointment resulting in humiliation and abasement. Therefore *ghina* is real in respect of God and relative in respect of man. As said by God in the Holy Qur'an, "Mankind is poor and dependent upon Allah who is *ghani* and praiseworthy." [35:15]. He has also said, "Allah is *ghani* and you are *fuqara* (powerless)." [47:37].

Some commoners give preference to the rich over the poor because of their wealth and power. By *ghina* they mean abundance, fortune and luxury and argue that since, in the verse, "If you are grateful, I give you more." [14:7]. God has commanded us to be thankful to Him for abundance and in the verse, "Allah is with those who exercise patience." [2:153]. Allah had advised patience in adversity, it follows that abundance is better than adversity, and therefore, the rich are superior to the poor. They forget that abundance breeds heedlessness (*ghaflat*) and adversity results in nearness to God; Allah says, "Go near the patient." When, according to God's promise, gratitude brings them more wealth,

it is really the heedlessness which is doubled. They do not know that the kind of *ghina* which the *mashaikh* prefer to *faqr*, is not the *ghina* which the laymen call *ghina*. The *ghina* of the laymen is achievement of wealth, while *ghina* of the elite (the saints) is the achievement of the Wealth-Giver. And there is a world of difference between the achievement of *waslat* (union with God) and achievement of *ghaflat* (heedlessness). Shaikh Abu Saeed (r.a.) has said, "*Al faqiro howal ghani bi-Allah*" (*Faqir* is *ghani* (rich) with Allah). To be rich with God means perpetual beatitude and the thrill of Divine Vision (*mushahidah*).

Another thing is that *mushahidah* is subject to *hijab* (veil). So when a man of *mushahidah* is veiled by abundance, the question is, "Will he be in need of unveiling or not. If you say 'no', he (*muhtaj*) is poor and no longer rich. If you say 'yes', you face an impossibility (because nobody likes to be veiled). Moreover, one cannot be said to be rich with God (*ghani ba khuda*) unless he assimilates Divine Attributes (in *fana-fi-Allah*) and finds new life (in *baqa-bi*-Allah). For, so long as he retains human attitudes, real *ghina* is not possible. Real *ghina* is incompatible with mortal beings steeped in indigence and want. The *ghani* is he who rests in *baqa-bi-Allah*; mortal beings do not deserve to be called *ghani*. It is said, "*Al ghani-o man aghnah Allah*". (A *ghani* is he whom Allah has made *ghani*). In this phrase Allah is the subject (*fa'el*) and man is the object (*maf'ul*). *Fa'el* is always self-sufficient or self-subsistent and *maf'ul* is subservient to a *fa'el* for his existence. In other words subsistence in the human self is mortality (which is imperfection) and subsistence in God is self-negation or self annihilation (which is perfection).

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Hujweri, assert that both the attributes of *ghina* and non-*ghina* are inapplicable to man because when he retains his individuality (before *fana-fi-Allah*) he cannot be called *ghani*, and when he negates himself and merges his individuality in the Divine Being at the time of *fana*, he is no more there to be called *ghani* or non-*ghani*. This shows that the attribute of *ghina* is a Divine attribute and *faqr* is a human attribute. All the Mashaikh and most of the *ulama* maintain that *faqr* is superior to *ghina*, since God and the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) have established its superiority. Moreover, consensus of Muslim *ummah* also supports this view point.

It is said that once Junaid and ibn Ata were discussing this issue. Ibn Ata argued in favour of *ghina* saying that tomorrow on the day of judgement, the wealthy would be called upon directly without anybody's mediation, to account for their wealth; and this is a great honour even if accountability is tinged with reproachment. Junaid replied that if the wealthy are chastised, the *fuqara* are forgiven. So, is forgiveness not better than accountability? But I am of the opinion that in the relation of love (with God) both forgiveness and reproach are objectionable. It does not become a friend to be forgiven for the sins of omission or be chastised for the sins of commission. Both of them are subject to interrogation, the rich for not being thankful and the poor for not being patient. But in love neither does a friend want anything nor is he questioned. As the proverb goes, "He who says man is *amir* (rich, *ghani*) misbehaves because it is bad to call man *amir* when the Almighty calls him *faqir*, even if he be a king." The rich are known for

sadqah (charity) and the poor for *sidq* (sincerity). And the man of *sadqah* can never supersede the man of sincerity, although in reality, both the *faqr* (poverty) of Hadhrat Sulaiman Farsi and wealth (*ghina*) of Prophet Solomon are the same in God's view. God said in respect of Prophet Solomon who was known for riches and Prophet Ayub who was known for poverty, that they were "good servants" (*niam al abd*). In fact, it is through Divine Grace that the *faqr* of Sulaiman Farsi has been equated with the *ghina* (wealth) of Prophet Solomon.

Commentary: Nicholson has not been able to distinguish between the two Sulaimans: Sulaiman Farsi, the companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who was a destitute (*faqir*) and King Solomon the prophet who was *amir*.

Abul Qasim Qushairi on *Faqr* and *Ghina*

Master Abul Qasim Qushairi (r.a.) once said to me, "Opinion is divided on the question of *faqr* and *ghina*, but the fact remains that the sponsors of both *faqr* and *ghina* relegate to themselves the power to choose; whereas, I leave everything to God. I believe what He chooses for me is better than what I choose for myself. If He makes me *ghani*, I make it a point not to become heedless (*ghafil*). If He makes me *faqir*, I try to see that I am not greedy and discontented." It shows that both *ghina* and *faqir* are God blessings (*ni'mat*) but both can be perverted, *ghania* by *ghaflat* (heedlessness) and *faqr* by greed. True *faqr* is detachment from everything other than God and *ghina* is attachment with other than God. But when *faqir* is detached from other than God, he is superior to the *ghani* (rich). So real *ghina* (richness) is not wealth, nor is *faqr* lack of wealth. Now since the owner of everything is God, as soon as the seeker renounces his ownership and takes to *faqr*, he gets rid of both *faqr* and *ghina* (and is emancipated).

Secrets of *Faqr* and *Ghina*

The *mashaikh* of Islam have beautifully brought out the secrets of *faqr* and *ghina* in their sayings which I am going to reproduce here. One of the saints of the modern age (*muta'akhirin*) has said: "*Faqr* is not the renunciation of *zad* (possessions), it is the renunciation of *murad* (covetousness)." So a *faqr* is not he whose hands are empty of *zad* but is he whose heart is empty of *murad*. If God gives you property and you keep it, you are *ghani*. If you renounce it even then you are *ghani* (of heart). But real *faqr* is neither to keep wealth nor to give it up, for both amount interference in God's *taqdir* (will). And *faqr* is to abstain from both, keeping (*hifz*) and renunciation (*taik*).

Shaikh Yahya Muadh Razi (r.a.) says, "The sign of *faqr* is the fear of its vanishing." This means that a true *faqir* who is in the midst of the state of *wilayat*, visions and oneness

(with God) is always apprehensive and nervous for fear of being deprived of them, since expropriation or deprivation is the thing which the Friends of God fear most.

Commentary: What it means is that the saints do not exercise their option at all. If God makes them rich they are contented and remain rich, although mentally and spiritually they think that the real owner is God and they do not own anything. If God makes them poor they remain contented with poverty thinking that wealth leads to corruption. *Abdiyat* (slavehood) is their chief characteristic. The real *abd* (slave) is he who does not exercise his option and leaves everything to God. Of real *abdiyat,* we shall speak later on in its proper context. For *abdiyat* is considered to be the highest stage in Islam, and is the speciality of the great Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.).

The word "Razi" (i.e. in Shaikh Yahya Muadh *Razi*) means the resident of Razi in Iran (birth place of Imam Fakhruddin Razi and many other divines of Islam.)

Khawaja Ruwaym says: "Asceticism is the preservation of the heart from covetousness and of the soul from deprivation, so that one goes on doing one's duties firmly." And he does not disclose what Divine Secrets are revealed to him and he conceals what befalls him of Divine gift outwardly, and that no state of overwhelming ecstasy can deter him from acting upon *shariat*. The sign of his rising above *bashriyat* (mortality) is that he passes into the realm of immortality and all his actions become Divine Actions. This stage also is the gift of God.

Bishr Hafi says: "The highest station (*maqam*) is to exercise *sabr* (patience) in *faqr* right up to *qabr* (grave)." When firmness in *faqr* is the highest station, it would be wrong to give too much importance to one's own deeds of piety. What Bishr Hafi means is really not flouting pious deeds but emphasising the fact that *faqr* is superior to everything and therefore he would stick to it at all costs.

Commentary:
The original Persian is rather difficult to interpret easily because of:

(i) rhetorical expression,
(ii) subtle theme.

Therefore the translations, both Urdu and English, done so far are a little vague. What Syed Ali Hujweri means is that Bishr Hafi in regarding *faqr* as the highest station, does not at all minimise the importance of pious deeds (i.e. rituals of Islam). He does recognise the obligatory nature of good deeds, but being himself a firm

ascetic, Bishr Hafi expresses his unshakeable belief in his own cult of asceticism which is not, in any case, incompatible with the dogmatic theology of Islam. Bishr Hafi was one of the greatest *Shayukh* (plural of shaikh) of his age. He was originally a big drunkard. History of his conversion to Sufism is that one day he found a piece of paper lying on the road. He picked it up and saw *"Bismillah"* written on it. He was pained to see the name of the Lord lying in dirt. He washed the paper, perfumed it and lodged it respectfully in an *almirah*. The same night, one of the saints of Baghdad was told in a dream by the Almighty to go to Bishr staying in a tavern and tell him that since he had respected the Lord's name, cleaned it and perfumed it, the Lord would, likewise, clean his heart and exalt him. When Bishr heard the Divine message, he bowed down in gratitude, bade farewell to his comrades and went with the shaikh barefooted (*Hafi*) and bare headed as he stood at the time of receiving the message. He was duly initiated in the Sufi way, went through the spiritual course and became one of the leading shaikhs of Baghdad. He was so great that Imam Ahmad bin Hambal accepted his discipleship and learnt Sufism from him.

Shaikh Shibli (*murid* of Junaid of Baghdad) says, "*Faqir* is one who is rich with nothing but God". This is because an ascetic cannot rest anywhere except with God. He has no ambition whatsoever except to be united with God. This is the outward interpretation. The real meaning is that God is your wealth and when you are without Him you are poor. But there is another interpretation also which is deeper than this. It is that when you realise God, you get lost in the Divine Being, lose your human existence and become rich (*tawangar*) in the real sense of the word. In other words your earthly self is a veil between you and richness in God. So the best thing for you is to get out of the way, i.e., get obliterated and get rich with God.

Actually what Shaikh Shibli (r.a.) implies is something like this in a deeper sense: "*Alfaqiro un la yastaghni unho*" (A *faqir* is he who is never content with anything). This is akin to what Shaikh Abdullah Ansari (r.a.) said in the following words, "Our agony is endless. We can neither gain our object nor can our human self be obliterated completely (in *fana*), both in this world and the next, because homogeneity is necessary for complete obliteration of the human self and union with God, whereas God and man are heterogenous. Nor is it possible to ignore Him, as a dervish can never ignore Him. So the journey ahead is arduous, and the destination is impossible to attain." He is the Beloved, the Unapproachable by human effort and the Unembraceable through heterogeneity. It is heterogeneity again which blocks the road to absolute *fana* and absolute *baqa*, so that it is neither possible for the *fani* (obliterated) to be *baqi* enough (eternalised) to enjoy union with Him, nor for the *baqi* to be *fani* (annihilation) enough to covet proximity, (*qurb*) with the Divine Beloved. In short, the lovers are faced with insurmountable difficulties. But they find some satisfaction in proceeding in the way of God from their own (human) point of view, step by step and stage by stage, by conceiving

the various states of nearness, although the Almighty is Transcendent and is beyond human attributes, and conception.

Commentary: Most of the translators, Urdu and English have shown here a tendency to give human weakness the name of impossibility in attaining the state of oneness with the Divine Beloved, which is not at all the intention of the author. What the author means by everlasting agony of the lovers is that since, the Divine Soul is Infinite, the finite human soul cannot possibly claim perfect union with the Infinite Being, however high his flight is. For when he reaches one stage of nearness he finds another stage ahead. When he reaches that stage, he finds another stage ahead, so that neither is there any end to the stages of nearness (*maratib-i-qurb*) nor is there any end to his flight. Saadi of Shiraz has expressed this experience of frustration in the following verse so beautifully:

"Neither is there an end to Divine Beauty, nor is there any end to Saadi's love. So he goes on drinking at the Divine Fountainhead in the hope of quenching his thirst, and dies like a man suffering from *istasqa'* (thirst disease) and the river (of Divine Beauty) flows on."

Mirza Bedil expresses the same experience in more glowing terms:

"Dear Beloved! I have been drinking the wine of Thy love and union throughout my life; but my thirst has not yet been quenched. How cruel thou art that Thou comest not into my embrace from my embrace."

This is the eternal agony of the lovers! But, mind you, this is the characteristic only of the final stages of the spiritual journey, when the seeker, after attaining the stage of *fana-fi-Allah*, descends back to the state of duality known as *baqa-bi-Allah*, and resumes the duties and functions of the Perfect Man, as Vicegerent of the Lord on earth. It is in the state of *fana*, that he imbibes Divine Attributes and is capable of being vested with Divine powers necessary for the Vicegerent. This is the highest spiritual stage known as *Abdiyat* or *Jamiyyat* when the perfect Man combines within himself the states of *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah*. He simultaneously enjoys the pleasures of union with, and the pangs of separation from the Divine Beloved. And this ultimate stage is characteristic of Islam only, whereas spiritual pilgrims in other mystical systems remain absorbed in the stage of *fana,* and that even, of not as high a degree as that of the Muslim seekers. This deprivation is the result of bypassing the Prophet of the age, and following the hilly tracks instead of being blessed by going along the Royal Highway of *La ilaha il Allah Muhammadur Rasulullah.*

It is clear from the above statement that spiritual agony of the lovers is not that of deprivation, but it is that lack of perfect unity with the Divine Beloved, since the Beloved is Infinite and perfect oneness is a thing impossible to achieve. Therefore the term perfection (*kamal* or *kamil*) is relative, not real.

Abul Hasan Nuri says, "A *faqir* is he who is satisfied in nothingness (*adam*) and bountiful when he gets something". Another version is, "He is happy in destitution and worries over abundance". This means that he is contented when he does not have and gives away everything to the more deserving when he gets. It is really wonderful to remain contented in dire want and to part with everything when it comes. This statement has two deeper meanings. One is that contentment in destitution is the sign of *ridha* (satisfaction with the Divine Will), and bountifulness on having something is the sign of love. One who is pleased (*radhi*) with God's pleasure deserves a robe of honour which is the sign of nearness (*qurb*) but a lover renounces the robe of honour (*khilat*), because it is a sign of separation (i.e., he gets it and goes away). The second meaning is that his contentment in need is expectation of gifts indeed. But when he gets something he gives it away because that something is other than God and he cannot rest with anything other than God. This is like the saying of Shaikh al-Mashaikh Abul Qasim Junaid bin Muhammad bin Junaid (r.a.), "*Faqr* is clearing the heart of everything other than God." For anything else is "other than God" and so long as the heart is occupied by worldly worries, *faqr* is not possible. Says Shibli, "*Faqr* is an ocean of calamities, and all calamities borne for God sake are full of blessings and honour." But it is not an honour for one who is not a dervish. It turns into an honour as soon as the dervish turns his gaze from affliction to the author of affliction (i.e., from misfortune to the one who brings misfortune [God]). And, mind you, what is that honour? It is total nearness (*waqt* which means *qurb*). What is nearness? It is total love (*muhabbat*). What is love? It is total vision (*mushahidah*) when the seeker is face to face with Divine Beauty. But it is an eyeless vision and ear-less hearing. Honourable, therefore in the real sense is one who is afflicted. For, misfortune (*bala*) is honour and fortune (*ni'mat*) is disgrace in reality (spiritually). It is misfortune which brings you face to face with God, and it is fortune which takes you away from Him. The affliction caused by *faqir* is the sign of Divine presence and the comfort of prosperity is the sign of separation from Him. So you can imagine which is real honour, to be with God or without Him? Since misfortune brings Divine vision coupled with Divine love, it is welcome (*ghanimat*) in whatever forms it comes.

Says Junaid, "O you who prefer *faqr*, you must realise that all your honour and esteem is through the grace of the Almighty. It is up to you now to see how you behave with Him in privacy." This means that when people love you and respect you by the kindness of God, it is now your duty to behave properly with Him. In case people's respect for you falls short of your expectation you need not worry since you also behave with God much below His expectations. The lowest of all men is he who is regarded by people as a friend of God and really he is not. The good among the people is he who is regarded as a friend

of God and he is indeed a friend of God. And the best of all is he who is not regarded as a friend of God and in reality is a friend. The first is like a physician who has no knowledge of the profession and makes the disease worse. And when he himself falls ill, he cannot cure himself and needs someone else to cure him. The second resembles a physician who knows his job and can cure himself and others equally well. The third category is he who is not regarded as a friend of God, but is a friend of God in reality. He is like a physician who is not known as a healer and who lives independent of all, maintains his own health through suitable diets, healthy drinks and a congenial environment and does not fall ill. But nobody knows him as such.

Some Sufis of modern times (*mutaakhirin*) maintain that *"fuqr* is non-existent or has no *wujud* (being)." This is rather difficult to explain, for when something has no *wujud*, it does not exist. This would amount to saying that *faqr* which has been discussed by the Friends of God so often has no reality. What it really means is that it is not *faqr* which is non-existent, but *faqr* is the name of the absence of possessions. I happened to come across a section of thinkers who did not take this saying seriously and laughed at it. I met another group who believed in it but did not understand what it meant.

As a matter of fact, both these groups were wrong. One regarded it as true due to ignorance and the other regarded ignorance as knowledge. What it is meant by the term non-existent (*adam*) by the Sufis is really the absence of negative qualities, which amounts to the presence of good qualities. And it is through good qualities that one gains access to Divine Presence.

Briefly speaking, *faqr* according to the dervish is spiritual and not physical. They do believe in the theory of cause and effect and, therefore adopt all possible means (*kasb*) to achieve the objective. But they regard their own power as nil and consider the Almighty to be the fountainhead of all power. In that state of affairs, he is neither the doer or undoer of anything. It is God who does and undoes everything. He, therefore, neither wishes anything for himself nor dismisses it.

I have seen a section of scholastics who believed *faqr* in theory but denied it in practice, which is ridiculous in the extreme. Actually what they denied was the effects (*sifat*) of *faqr* and not *faqr* itself. Similarly while speaking about Sufism they believed in its reality but denied its effects. They did not even believe that what they followed was nothing but excessive worldly desires such as anger, greed, pride, lust, covetousness, etc., but gave it the high sounding name of perfection.

So the seekers of truth have no choice but to leave them to themselves. At the same time the seeker of truth has to be careful to be familiar with devious techniques, so that he is not taken in by their high sounding phraseology. An elite is he who is capable of distinguishing principles (*usul*) from details (*furu'a*), and without this knowledge he does not know where he stands.

I have said this to induce you to follow the path of Sufism and to do full justice to it. Now I will elaborate briefly the principles and secrets of the Sufi *mashaikh* and then deal with some of the distinguished personalities along with the varying schools of thought, their high stations, their truth and realities, their ways and etiquettes of companionship and so on, as far as possible, to facilitate your work.

CHAPTER THREE

About *Tasawwuf* (Sufism)

Allah Almighty has said:

"There are servants of God who walk humbly on the earth and when an ignorant one converses with them, they pray for his welfare." [25:63]

Commentary: This shows that it is not desirable for a *mu'min* (true believer) to unnecessarily quarrel with those ignorant folk who walk arrogantly on God's earth.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Those who hear the prayers of a Sufi and do not say '*Ameen*' come in the list of negligent ones in the eyes of Allah."

Commentary: In this Hadith words like Sufis and Sufism are present. This proves that Sufism was practised in the blessed time of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

The Reason for the Name of Sufi or Sufism

Some say that Sufis are called Sufis because they belong to the first *saff* (row) meaning the highest category. Some say they are called Sufis because their conditions correspond to those of the *Ashab-e-Safa* (people of the verandah). Some are of the opinion that this

word is derived from *safa* (purity). In fact each person has interpreted its meaning according to his own understanding, but according to the dictionary, all this is debatable. The most correct meaning of this word is probably *safa* (purity), which means purity of the *qalb* (heart), the opposite of which is impurity.

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "Goodness has gone from the world and only bad remains." The good in anyone is called his *safwat* (own selection). So when Sufis make their manners and deeds desirable and attain salvation from their lower desires they become known as Sufis. This name is just an outward demarcation by which they are recognised. The truth is that their states are so elevated that they cannot be disobeyed.

This should satisfy those who require a derivative for this word but Allah Almighty has kept the states and stations of the Sufis hidden from the common people, so that some people think that Sufism is the name of some apparent status which is without any inner reality. Some say Sufism is a meaningless custom, and deny its existence by mocking it, denying the beliefs of the People of the Verandah and the respected Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

The truth is, "Verily purity of heart is an attribute the Siddiq-i-Akbar, Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq. If you want to be a Sufi look at him."

It should be remembered that inner purification has a hidden aspect and an apparent aspect. The outward manifestation is to expel the treacherous world from the heart, and the inner is to break away from everything other than Allah. Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq bin Qahafa (r.a.) possessed both these attributes. He is the leader of the Sufis. He was in a state of total detachment from the world when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) passed away. The respected Companions were extremely distressed to the extent that Hadhrat Umar unsheathed his sword declaring that he would strike off the head of anyone who dared to say that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had passed away.

Commentary: Some have said that this was because he wished for political reasons, to temporarily hide the fact of the Prophet's passing away from the enemies of Islam. Some thought that he had such extreme love for the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) that he could not bear the news that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) had passed away. Those who have lost their dear ones can understand this feeling very well. For example, say my dear brother passed away two years ago; I cannot, yet, say that he has died nor can I say I went to his grave. I just say I went to the graveyard. Some conjecture that, as Hadhrat Umar knew that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has been blessed with eternal life of a Prophet (s.a.w.), he forbade people from saying that he was dead. Hadhrat Siddiq Akbar was at such an elevated state of *baqa-bi-Allah* (subsistence in God) and servitude that he was a tower of strength and fortitude.

Siddiq-i-Akbar proclaimed in a loud voice, "O, people! He who worships Muhammad should know that Muhammad has left this world but he who worships the God of Muhammad should know that He is alive and never dies."

He then recited this verse: "Muhammad is a Prophet of Allah Almighty. Many prophets have passed away before him. If they die or are slain, will you turn away from the Religion of Islam?" [3:144].

This means that whoever has an attachment to temporary things perishes, but whoever attaches himself to permanence gains eternal life, even though his body perishes. Whoever sees the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) with physical eyes, the Holy Prophet passes away from his heart when he is veiled from this world. But whoever sees the Holy Prophet from the point of reality, it makes no difference to them whether or not the Holy Prophet is veiled from this world. This is so because he who has attained the state of *baqa-bi-Allah* has seen the Holy Prophet as living in Allah, and he who is in the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* sees the Holy Prophet as a mortal absorbed in Allah. Instead of seeing the mortal who has changed, he sees only the Changer. Such a person has not attached himself to other than God, nor glanced at His creatures. Someone has aptly said: "He who pays attention to the world is destroyed, and he who sees the Truth is an angel." i.e. Placing one's faith in human beings is a sign of destruction, and placing one's faith in God is the sign of an angel.

Hadhrat Siddiq-i-Akbar had reached the state of erasing all thoughts of the treacherous world from his heart. He distributed all his wealth and possessions in the way of Allah, and presented himself before the Holy Prophet in the garb of a dervish. The Holy Prophet asked him what he had left for his family. He replied that he had left countless wealth for them — firstly the love of Allah and secondly, following the footsteps of the Messenger (s.a.w.)

Commentary: Allama Iqbal described this incident in poetic form thus:

The lamp suffices for the moth,
And the flower for the nightingale,
For Siddiq-i-Akbar,
Allah and His Prophet are enough.

When Hadhrat Abu Bakr's heart was purified of the love of the world, his hand was automatically cleansed from the filth of the world and he gave away everything in the way of Allah. These are all the attributes of a true Sufi. Denying them is denying the Truth, and is clearly an act of pride. I said that purity is the opposite of impurity. Actually impurity is an attribute of man. In truth a Sufi is he who is purified of the filth of the

world. In the beginning when the women of Egypt were antagonistic against Zulaikha, this was a display of human frailty, but when they saw the beauty and elegance of Hadhrat Yusuf (Joseph), their human attributes disappeared and they cried out, "This is not a man!" [12:31]. They said this because their human attributes had disappeared and Hadhrat Yusuf appeared to them as an angel, and not as a human being. That is why the Sufi Shaikhs have said, "Purity is not a human attribute because man is made of mud, which contains filth." A human is not free of impurities of the lower self (because his origin is mud.) He cannot attain a pure heart by his deeds, nor can the human impurities be cleansed through striving. Purity of heart has nothing to do with words and deeds, nor any connection with his apparent names and titles, "Purity and saintliness is in the nature of the Friends of God. They are suns without clouds."

Commentary: This does not mean that man can reach God without good deeds. It means that saintliness, knowledge of God and attaining nearness to God is not acquired but is inherent. It is gained, not through striving, but only by the Grace of Allah. Whoever receives the compassionate glance of Allah, is born with its capacity and capability. But because man has no knowledge of his own capability or destiny, he should certainly strive hard, because he could have the capacity inside him, which may not be used at all. It is true to a certain extent Allah Almighty has placed the love of Himself in the heart of every single person and this should be utilised to the utmost.

The man who has annihilated his own attributes and gained life by acquiring the attributes of the Friend is, according to the Men of God, like the Sun. When someone asked the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) about Hadhrat Haris (r.a.), he said, "He is a true believer whose heart Allah has illuminated with the radiance of true belief." His face is shinning like the moon with the effect of this.

A saint said, "When the light of the sun and moon join together, they become the perfect example of pure love and Oneness." What status is the radiance of the sun and moon as compared to the radiance of the Love and Oneness of the True Beloved? The sun and the moon are the source of great radiance for the world; they are therefore quoted as examples. We can see the sky by the light of the sun and the moon. By the light of the Knowledge of God, Oneness, and Love, we can see the Throne of the Merciful, and envision the conditions of the Hereafter in this very world. All the exalted Shaikhs are in agreement that when a person is freed from the imprisonment of his position, that is, he does not care for his rank or status, and is purified from all evil habits, he becomes steadfast without change or capriciousness.

Commentary: Capriciousness means being overcome by conditions. He becomes so strong that he is not overcome or absorbed by any conditions of ecstasy. In fact he drinks rivers and oceans of the wine of Oneness, and still cries, "Give me more!"

When he develops praiseworthy qualities and is not proud, his condition is far higher than mere intellect can reach. He is purified of all doubts and uncertainties. He is then constantly in the Divine Presence. As the saints have said, "Inner purification is a state of presence which is permanent. It is a treasure which has not been gained by striving, but only by the blessings of Allah." His presence becomes permanent, and is acquired without his trying for it. When the *salik* (seeker) reaches this stage on the True Path, he is absorbed in the world and the hereafter, and reaches the stage of *fana-fi-Allah*. He acquires the attributes of Allah in his human form. Gold and dust are the same for him. The commands of God that are difficult for ordinary people, become easy for him.

When Hadhrat Haris (r.a.) presented himself before the Holy Prophet, he said, "O Haris! What was your condition in the morning?" He replied, "I spent the morning with perfect faith in Allah." The Holy Prophet said, "O Haris! What are you saying? Everything has its own reality. What is the reality of your faith?" He submitted, "I have shunned the world and detached it from my heart, till now, stones, silver, gold and mud are the same for me. I stayed awake at night and fasted during the day, till I saw the Throne of Allah and the people of Paradise meeting each other, and the people of Hell accusing each other." Then the Holy Prophet said, "You have attained gnosis, now be steadfast in it." Meaning, cling to it. The Holy Prophet repeated these words three times.

Sufi is the name given to the perfect and accomplished Friends of God. A saint said, "The one who is drowned in love is called a *safi* (pure one) and the one who is drowned in the Beloved and free from other than Allah is called a Sufi."

Commentary: Drowned in love means turning towards Allah Almighty by excessive prayer and spiritual striving, and drowned in the Beloved means attaining nearness to the Divine Being and being continually absorbed in Him (*fana-fi-Allah*).

Etymologically, the word Sufi is not derived from anything because a derivative has to have some similarity. But 'Sufi' is such a magnificent name that it has nothing similar to it. The physical world is impure, which is the opposite of purity (*safa*); derivatives are not taken from opposites. For the Sufis the meaning of the word 'Sufi' is as clear as crystal and needs no clarification. Just as someone has said, "The name 'Sufi' cannot be explained by prose or poetry."

Everyone is trying to understand the reality of the Sufi. Whether they discover it or not, it makes no difference to the status of the Sufi. The perfect ones are called Sufis, and the companions and *murids* of the respected Sufis are called *Mutasawwif*. Sufism has a connection with the subject of perfection, which precludes striving, and this is a branch of the real origin. This meaning is clearly evident from the dictionary and is visible to all. As has been said, "Purity of heart is saintliness, which has a sign and a custom. Sufism is a fact against which there is no complaint."

Commentary: It is difficult to understand the meaning of the poetry and prose of those days. In simple words, the truth of the purity of the heart is quite apparent, and everyone can see it, and nobody can possibly find fault with it.

Sufis are of three types: *Sufi*, *Mutasawwif* and *Mustasawwif*. The *Sufi* is he who has annihilated himself and is living eternally with Allah Almighty. He emerges from his human state and is united with Reality. The *Mutasawwif* is he who is constantly engaged in spiritual striving to attain a higher state, and tries to follow the footsteps of the exalted *Sufis*. The *Mustasawwif* is he who dons the garb and appearance of the *Sufis* merely for the sake of wealth and position. He has no real connection with either the *Sufis* or the *Mutasawwif*. It is said about him, "The *Mustasawwif* is like a covetous fly to the Sufis, and others think he is like a wolf."

Commentary: The example of a fly is given because it is greedy, and feeds on lawful and unlawful food. The wolf also makes no difference between lawful and unlawful and slyly preys on sheep with his strength.

That is why *Sufis* are called the united ones, *Mutasawwifs* are called the principled ones and *Mustasawwifs* are called the worthless ones.

Commentary: The 'united ones' means having attained union with Allah. The 'principled ones' are constantly engaged in search for the Truth, following rules and regulations. The 'worthless ones' are obviously engaged in foolishness and frivolity.

He who has attained union desires nothing except the Friend. The principled ones are regular and constant in the rules of *tariqat*, and are advancing stage by stage. But the worthless ones are denied everything. They are just copying the outward form of the

Sufis. They are forsaken by the Friend and far from union. There are countless sayings of the Shaikhs about Sufism. A few are given in this book for the sake of brevity. May Allah guide us.

Section

Sayings of The Sufis

Saying of Dhunnun Misri

Hadhrat Dhunnun Misri (r.a.) said, "The Sufi is he who speaks Truth. In his silence all parts of his body give evidence of his absorption in God." This means that when the Sufi talks, he relates Truth and the knowledge of God. His speech is according to his spiritual state. When he is silent, his silence declares his absorption in God. He is an example of detachment from the world. His discourse is about Truth, and his conduct is complete detachment. In other words, his speech is pure truth and his actions are pure absorption in God.

Saying of Junaid Baghdadi

Hadhrat Junaid Baghdadi (r.a.) says, "Sufism is an attribute wherein is man's subsistence." When he was asked if it was the attribute of man or God, he replied that in reality it is the attribute of the Creator, but in the world it is a human attribute.

This means that Allah Almighty can only be reached by complete absorption, thereby negating human attributes. That is why it can be said that annihilating human attributes leads to gaining Godly attributes. From one point of view it can be said to be the attribute of Allah, and in an another point of view it can be said to be a human attribute. The truth is that there is no connection with human attributes, because human attributes are perishable and temporary and Godly Attributes are ancient and eternal. For example, when man was ordered to fast, it became his attribute and duty to fast. But, in fact, it was Allah's command. Allah Almighty said to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) to tell the people that, "Fasting is Mine, and I am its reward." That is why, though outwardly fasting is an act of man, but actually it is an act of God. Whatever is done, the true Doer is Allah, and the shadowy doer is man.

Saying of Abul Hasan Nuri

Hadhrat Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) said, "Sufism is denying the pleasures of the lower self." This has two types—one real and one shadowy (or metaphorical). When a man starts

enjoying his denial of worldly pleasures, this is also a kind of pleasure which is called abstinence from the world. True abstinence is that instead of man abstaining from pleasure, pleasure should abstain from the man, meaning that in this detachment he should neither long for, nor feel, any pleasure. This is true detachment, the result of which will definitely be manifestations and visions of Allah. Apparent detachment is the deed of the person, and freedom from pleasure is the deed of Allah. The deed of a person is unreal but the deed of Allah is Reality. This saying of Hadhrat Abul Hasan Nuri clarifies the saying of Hadhrat Junaid Baghdadi (r.a.) mentioned above. (This also makes clear the truth about destiny and self-determination). Hadhrat Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) also said, "The Sufis are those whose spirits have gained the attributes of the first and highest category and have attained nearness to Allah Almighty."

This means that, by controlling their lower desires they have cleansed themselves of human impurities and freed themselves from the dangers of the world. They are incapable of greed and desire. They have successfully achieved the highest position of nearness to God, and attained salvation from other than God. He also said, "The Sufi is he who neither possesses anything nor is possessed by anyone."

That is, he does not think anything in the world is his personal possession (thinking it to belong to Allah), and neither does he belong to anyone but Allah. This is the state of *fana-fi-Allah*. He who is annihilated cannot own anything, nor be owned himself. Because only a thing that is present can be owned. When the Sufi himself is not there, he cannot own anything in this world or the next, as he himself is not there. He cannot possess anything, nor make anyone his subject. He cannot come under the orders of anyone or be subject to anyone. This is very subtle saying. It is the belief of those who believe in total *fana*. I will make clear their misunderstanding in this book so that you know the Truth by the Grace of Allah Almighty.

Commentary: This shows the elevated status of the respected writer.

Saying of ibni Jala Damishqi

Hadhrat ibni Jala Damishqi (r.a.) said, "Sufism is Truth, not just a custom or form." The reason for this is that customs are connected to people and Truth is connected to Allah Almighty. When the very name Sufi means distancing from people, it is definitely far above mere custom.

Saying of Abu Umar Damishqi

Hadhrat Abu Umar Damishqi (r.a.) said, "Sufism is a name for those who see the universe as defective, and, in fact, close their eyes to it."

To see the universe as flawed is the speciality of *fana-fi-Allah*; and closing the eyes to it is the state of *baqa-bi-Allah* because at this stage the *salik* (seeker) cannot see himself but Allah sees through his eyes.

Commentary: The description of the states of *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah* have already been given earlier. Here it is only necessary to say that when Mansur Hallaj (r.a.) said: "Ana 'l Haq" (I am the Truth), this was not him speaking, but Allah speaking through him. However the brutish public thought that Mansur spoke, and had him hanged. The clarification of this is being given later.

The seeker of the world sees the world and does not step outside it. The better person is he who finds fault with the world, meaning he hates it, and does not long for it (this is the stage of *fana*). A higher stage is not to see the world at all, because even if he hates it, he is still veiled, because seeing other than Allah is also a veil. But he who does not see the world at all cannot be veiled from something he does not see. He does not see himself, but Allah sees through him. This is a well established saying of the Sufis and the *salikin* (seekers), who have seen manifestations of Allah's radiance in their hearts; however, explaining it here would be inappropriate.

Saying of Abu Bakr Shibli

Hadhrat Abu Bakr Shibli (r.a.) said: "Sufism is paganism because Sufism is the name for guarding the heart against other than Allah, whereas, in fact, there is nothing other than Allah."

This means that when Oneness of Being is the Truth, to think anything is other than Allah is polytheism. So if Sufism is praised for being something which keeps the heart guarded against anything other than Allah, then we are not believers in Oneness of Being, and believe in many beings (because it is polytheism to accept that there is anything other than Allah. When there is nothing other than Allah, then why does the heart have to be protected from it?)

Commentary: Here some clarification on the meaning of *wahdat-ul-wujud* (Unity of Being) is necessary. Unity of Being means that the universe does not have a separate existence, but is included in the Being of Allah Almighty, and all present things like the objects in the universe, earth, sky, sun, moon, stars, trees, and mountains that we can see, have a shadowy or metaphorical existence, not a real one. They are the shadow of the Real. For example, just as clay pots are seen as separate entities, they are really clay. Or when ice, foam, bubbles, and waves are seen as separate, they are in fact just water, which appears in different forms. Or when a scholar writes a book, it seems as if the book is separate from the writer, but actually it is the words of the writer, and cannot be separated from him. It is also necessary to believe in the Oneness of Being from the Islamic and *shariat* point of view, otherwise, as explained above, it would amount to polytheism, because the picture of the Being of the Essence of Allah Almighty that we have gleaned from the Qur'an and Hadith is that the Divine Being is Unlimited, from the point of His Attributes as well as His Essence.

If one imagines the universe to be separate from the Divine Being, then His Being is limited, and it has to be said that Allah Almighty is not in the universe, but is present every where else, so He becomes limited. And to think of Allah Almighty as limited amounts to paganism and polytheism (*shyrk*). When Allah Almighty is One without partner, then He is obviously without partner in both His Essence and His Attributes. The Being of Allah is one Attribute out of His Attributes. Therefore to accept the universe as a separate entity and the Being of Allah as a separate one, makes not only the Being of Allah limited, but also points to polytheism. When the Divine Essence and Attributes are both without partner, how can there be a partner in His Attribute of Being? This is absurd.

Therefore the Oneness of Being is the Truth, and it has to be accepted that there is no other being or presence except that of Allah Almighty. Whatever is present is the Being of Allah. People who look at this superficially think that when there is no other being and all is the Being of God, then why is idol worship forbidden in Islam? The answer to this is that although the idol is not separate from God, it is not God either. For example, the hand of Zaid is not separate from him, but it is not Zaid. A part cannot be said to be the whole. So, in Islam, idol worship is as ridiculous as if someone requested Zaid for some money, and he refused, so the man tells the hand of Zaid to take out the money from his pocket and give it to him. The conclusion is that, just as the hand of Zaid is not Zaid himself, in the same way the idol is not God, but nor is it separate from God. The clarification of this point and the full discussion of the Oneness of Being and the Oneness of His manifestations and their comparison can be found in the book titled "*Wahdat-ul-Wujud*" and "*Wahdat-ush-Shuhud*" by the translator.

Saying of Shaikh Husri

Hadhrat Shaikh Husri (r.a.) said: "Sufism is the name for the purifying of the heart of all resistance." This means that the heart should abstain from resistance to the Truth. Friendship is the name of accord, and accord is the opposite of resistance. The demand of Friendship is that the command of the Friend has to be obeyed in all the world. When the desires of the Loved one and the Beloved become the same, where is the resistance?

Saying of Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussain bin Ali ibni Abi Talib

Hadhrat Muhammad bin Ali (r.a.) (Imam Baqar) said, "Sufism is the name of courtesy, so the person who is the most courteous is the greatest Sufi." Good nature is of two types — one with Allah and the other with people. Good nature with Allah means to accept whatever He gives, and be content with His decree. Good nature with people is to patiently endure their insults. Both these states are beneficial for the seeker. Allah Almighty is unaffected by either the acceptance or disobedience of the seeker, and both these conditions are a result of the theory of Oneness.

Commentary: When the Oneness of Being is the Truth, then affability with the people of God is also affability with Allah Almighty. All is the manifestation of One Being. With this saying of Hadhrat Imam Baqar it is also proved that the word Sufism was extant in his time. It must be remembered that he was a Companion of the Companions.

Saying of Abu Muhammad Murtaish

Hadhrat Abu Muhammad Murtaish (r.a.) said, "The Sufi is he whose step does not go beyond his thoughts." This means that he should do everything knowing he is in the Divine Presence. His body should be where his heart is, and his heart should be where his body is. There should be no difference between his saying and doing. What he says is what he should do, and what he does should be the same as what he says. This is the sign of permanent presence with Allah. This is against those whose theory is that if one is annihilated from one's self, then he is present with Allah. This is not correct. In fact the truth is that he is present with himself and with God. This is the stage of *Jama-ul-Jama*, when the *salik* (seeker) still has his own thoughts. He sees himself, so how can he disappear from himself? When the *salik* does not see himself then he has disappeared from himself and is present with Allah.

Commentary: This is a very profound passage which needs clarification. To understand it we must look at the outline of *suluk ilallah* (journey to God). In this the stages of *fana-fi-Allah*, *baqa-bi-Allah* and *jamiyyat* or *jama-ul-Jama* have been clarified. This is the final stage of the ascent of man, where the *salik* is at the same time *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah*. There is no end to the Essence of Allah. Therefore, there is no end to travel in Allah. The storm of the love of Allah is so great that the *salik* is not satisfied at any stage of nearness he has reached, and cries out "give me more" every moment. At this stage even his nearness becomes distance, just as Hadhrat Mujaddid Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (r.a.) wrote to his Shaikh Hadhrat Khawaja Baqi-bi-Allah (r.a.). He wrote that he was at the stage that even his nearness became distance. Hadhrat Khawaja Ghulam Farid has described this state thus: "Where nearness has become distance, union and separation are the same. The selves of both the seeker and the Sought are evident."

Meaning that the seeker is not intoxicated or absorbed, but his longing is so great that at every stage of union he desires another union — he is in constant search for even more nearness. "The Qalandar is he who wants an even higher stage than union." His goal is unattainable, that is, total union. Saadi (r.a.) pointed out to this stage in the following verse: "It is not amazing that I am mad in love with the Beloved. The amazing thing is that I am at the same time united and separated." Mirza Bedil (r.a.) also tells us of this state:

O Friend, all my life I have been drinking Thy wine of Love,
But my thirst for Thy love is not quenched;
How cruel Thou art for not coming into my embrace from my embrace.

Meaning he has attained union with the Friend, but because there is no limit to His Beauty and Elegance and Nearness and Union, the thirst for union continues without being contented at any stage of Nearness and Union. Maulana Rumi (r.a.) has described this condition thus — it can be read in the introduction to *Maqabisul Majalis*:

The Beloved is in my embrace,
but I still search for Him.
My condition is like one who is suffering from thirst-disease and is sitting on the bank of the river drinking water,
But my thirst still continues.

Hadhrat Shaikh Saadi Shiraz (r.a.) says:

No end is there to the Beauty and Elegance of the Beloved,
Nor is there end to the sayings of Saadi.

Like a man with thirst-disease,
The lover continues to drink water from the river,
till he dies;
But the river continues to flow.

This stage is called *jama-ul-jama*. It is also called *jamiyyat*, because at this stage the *salik* is both *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah*. The *salik* should not be contented at any stage of *fana-fi-Allah,* but should strive every moment, till the last breath in his body for higher and higher stages of nearness and union, because this is the highest stage of human ascent and is the object of human existence. This is the reason why the highest ranking respected Sufis prefer servitude, because this indicates humility and submission, by which more and more stages of nearness are attained. This rank of servitude was the speciality of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) He was not totally absorbed and intoxicated in the state of *fana*, but was sober in intoxication and alert in ecstasy, continually striving to progress in search of the unattainable total union. Khawaja Ghulam Farid (r.a.) also said the following about this stage: "I am in the state that my *fana* has become *baqa*, and *baqa*, *fana*."

This has the same meaning as has been stated earlier, that one should not be contented at any stage of *fana* or union, and strive for more and more stages of union. One should think that one is not so absorbed in *fana* so that further progress is stopped, nor is one so inert that one cannot soar higher in the Essence of Allah. Only the falcon soaring in the forest of Truth can understand this, i.e. one who has actually passed through these stages.

Saying of Abu Bakr Shibli

About the same subject Hadhrat Abu Bakr Shibli (r.a.) said, "The Sufi does not see anything but Allah Almighty in both the worlds."

Now, as man is included in other than Allah inspite of his entity, the Sufi does not even see himself, and is totally freed from himself, whether he is in the state of *fana* or *baqa*.

Commentary: Now apparently this saying of Hadhrat Shibli (r.a.) is different from the saying mentioned above. The translator was hesitant to accept the fact that Hadhrat Makhdoom Syed Ali Hujweri (r.a.) had written that this saying of Hadhrat Shibli (r.a.) was in accordance with it; it is actually in conflict with it. This difficulty was overcome because the respected author had written a sentence above in the saying of Hadhrat Khawaja Murtaish (r.a.) about the stage of *jama-ul-jama*.

Now the point is understood that this was not supposed to mean that the saying of Hadhrat Shibli (r.a.) was like that of Hadhrat Muhammad Murtaish (r.a.), but conformed to the saying that has been written above in Persian. Because, in the saying of Hadhrat Muhammad Murtaish (r.a.), *jamiyyat*, meaning the stages of *fana* and *baqa* together at the same time has been proved. The saying of Hadhrat Shibli (r.a.) speaks of only *fana*, and not *jamiyyat*. This shows the high status of Hadhrat Makhdoom Syed Ali Hujweri (r.a.), even though there are two intermediaries between himself and Hadhrat Shaikh Abu Bakr Shibli (r.a.) and even though his Shaikhs were of an earlier generation.

Saying of Junaid Baghdadi

Hadhrat Junaid Baghdadi (r.a.) said that Sufism is founded on eight qualities.

1. Generosity
2. Acceptance
3. Patience
4. Signs
5. Poverty
6. Woollen robe
7. Travelling and
8. Piety.

The generosity of Hadhrat Ibrahim (a.s.), for he sacrificed his son in the way of God; the acceptance or acquiescence of Hadhrat Ismail (a.s.); the patience of Hadhrat Ayub (a.s.); the signs of Hadhrat Zakariya (a.s.); the poverty of Hadhrat Yahya (a.s.), the woollen robe of Hadhrat Musa (a.s.); the travelling of Hadhrat Isa (a.s.), and the piety of Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.). The generosity and sacrifice of Hadhrat Ibrahim (a.s.) was such that he sacrificed his son in the way of Allah. The acceptance of Hadhrat Ismail (a.s.) was such that he placed his neck under the knife and was prepared to sacrifice his dear life. The patience of Hadhrat Ayub (a.s.) was such that his body was infested with worms but he was content with whatever Allah Almighty willed for him. The wonders of the signs of Hadhrat Zakariya (a.s.) were that Allah Almighty said in the Holy Qur'an, "For three days he did not talk to anyone except by signs and hints." [3:41]. Allah Almighty also said about him, "Allah Almighty spoke to him secretly." [19:3].

The poverty of Hadhrat Yahya (a.s.) was such that he was an alien in his own land, and a stranger among his own people. The travels of Hadhrat Isa (a.s.) were such that he carried with him only a wooden bowl and a comb. When he saw a man drinking water by cupping his hands, he threw the bowl away. And when he saw a man combing his hair with his fingers, he threw the comb away. The woollen robe of Hadhrat Musa (a.s.)

was such that he always wore the same robe. And the piety of Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.) was such that although Allah Almighty had given the key to the treasures of all the world, he only requested Allah to give him food one day and keep him hungry the next. This is a great principle in *tariqat*.

Saying of Abul Hasan Husri

Hadhrat Husri (r.a.) said: "The Sufi is he whose existence has no non-existence, and his non-existence has no existence." Meaning that whatever he attains he never loses, and whatever he loses he never regains.

Commentary: This means that when he attains Allah Almighty, he never loses Him, and when he loses himself, he never regains it.

The other meaning of this is that his profit (*yaft*) contains no loss, and his loss (*na yaft*) contains no profit...

Commentary: In *suluk* in Allah there are two stages — *Yaft* and *Na Yaft*. *Yaft* means that the person sees Allah Almighty from himself, and *Na Yaft* is when the person sees himself through Allah Almighty. The first stage is the stage of the Lover, and the other stage is that of the Beloved. The first is the act of the *murid*, and the second the act of the *murad* (goal). The *salik* (*murid*) is the Lover, and the goal is the Beloved.

...until there is negation without affirmation and affirmation without negation.

Commentary: This means that, at the stage of *fana-fi-Allah*, complete annihilation is attained by him, so that not an atom of his humanity remains. Maulana Jami (r.a.) says in *"Lawaih Jami"* that, until even an atom of self hood remains in *fana*, the person who claims to have attained *fana* is a liar. But *arifs* (knowers of God) say that if a person achieves even an atom of *fana*, he will not be doomed, and will never be accursed and denied. Affirmation without negation means that when he attains the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah*, he will never be naughted. Details of the stages of *fana* and *baqa* have been given earlier. One hopes that the *saliks* on the Right Path are able to understand.

These matters are for the *saliks* to understand, for those who do not have perfect knowledge of the states and stages of *suluk* through practice, will certainly never understand. They should abstain from pointless criticism. Spirituality is also an art like other arts, and its subtleties can be only be understood by those accomplished in its art, just like medical and engineering books can only be understood by accomplished doctors and engineers. Others cannot understand any of it. If one strives to practice *suluk* in Allah, then after purifying the lower self these stages can be attained quite easily, and these subtleties can also be understood. In fact, perfection in spirituality is easier to attain than in other skills and sciences. Because in other skills there is no pull from another direction, but the seeker in the way of Allah, at the very beginning, gets a very strong pull and attraction from Allah Almighty, as is apparent in this Hadith-al-Qudsi; Allah Almighty says: "When my servant comes towards me one span, I go towards him by two spans. When he comes one arm's length towards me, I go towards him two arm lengths. And when he comes walking towards me, I run towards him." What a great blessing and encouragement this is. It is not possible in any other type of work.

Both these forms are found in the conditions of two Prophets (a.s). First, Hadhrat Musa (a.s.) who reached Allah Almighty and never lost Him. He supplicated to the Divine Audience: "O my Lord, grant me inner light, and make my task easy." [20:25-26].

And second, Hadhrat Muhammad Mustafa (s.a.w.), in whose humility and submissiveness not a trace of his being remained. Allah Almighty said about him: "Have I not granted thee inner light?" [94:1].

This means that one asked for adornment and the other was adorned without asking for it.

Saying of Ali bin Bandar al-Sairni

Hadhrat Ali bin Bandar al-Sairni (r.a.) said, "Sufism is that the Sufi should not look at himself outwardly or inwardly, and only look at Allah."

This means that if he sees himself outwardly, he should see only the blessing and fate given to him by Allah Almighty, and should think his achievements not equal to even a mosquito's wing as compared to the Divine favours he has received. And when he sees himself inwardly, he should think his inward perfections to be only the result of the assistance and blessings of Allah Almighty. He should not think that his attainment or strength is even an atom's worth as compared to the power of Allah Almighty. He should not see anything but Allah in his inner or outer state, and consider his own perfection and strivings as inconsequential.

Saying of Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Maqri

Hadhrat Shaikh Muhammad bin Ahmad al-Maqri (r.a.) said, "Sufism is the name for constancy in conditions, relating to Allah Almighty."

This means that the inner condition of the Sufi cannot be changed, and he cannot be diverted from the way of God. The reason for this is that when the heart of the person is a lover of the Changer of Hearts (Allah Almighty), his condition cannot be changed, in fact he becomes steadfast in this condition, and cannot be turned away from Allah.

Commentary As has been related above, the *arifs* say that the *salik* on the way of Allah who has achieved even the slightest degree of *fana*, will be saved from straying by Allah Almighty, and he will never be denied the mercy and blessing of Allah Almighty.

Section

The Conduct of the Sufis in the Affairs of People

Saying of Abu Hafs

Hadhrat Abu Hafs Nishapuri (r.a.) said, "Sufism is the name of courtesy. Courtesy at all times, courtesy at every place, courtesy in every condition. Whoever sees courtesy as indispensable will reach high stations, and whoever is not constantly courteous will be cast far away, and is accursed. His pride and vanity make him think he is near and accepted."

This is in accordance with the saying of Hadhrat Abul Hasan (r.a.): "Sufism is not the name of a denomination, nor of any science. It is morals."

If this were a science, it would be attainable by lectures and instruction. This is politeness. Until an intention is made for it, it cannot be practised. And it cannot be attained until full justice is done to it. The difference between custom and good manners is that customs are practised without sincerity, and the outward action does not correspond with the inner feelings. Politeness is a praiseworthy act which contains no formality. Its internal and external aspects are the same, and there is no hypocrisy involved in it.

Sayings of Muhammad Murtaish

Hadhrat Muhammad Murtaish said, "Sufism is the name for good manners or courtesy."

There are three types of courtesy:

1. Steadfastness in carrying out the laws of Allah Almighty with sincerity, and not hypocritically.

2. Respect for the elderly, compassion for the young, and justice for contemporaries, not expecting anything in return.

3. Not acting on desires of the lowerself, or on the temptations of Satan.

Whoever practices regularly these three types of behaviour is counted among the courteous people.

Once Hadhrat Ummul Mu'minin Ayesha Siddiqah (r.a.) was asked what kind of nature the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) possessed. She told them to read the Qur'an where Allah Almighty proclaimed: "Pardon people and overlook their faults, enjoin on them good acts, and stay away from the ignorant." [7:199]

Hadhrat Khawaja Muhammad Murtaish (r.a.) said, "The Sufi faith is pure magnificence. Keep it guarded from unmannerliness." This means to avoid pretending Sufis and not to emulate them. When people see these types of Sufis who listen to music, dance and go round kings and rich people for rich food, they think all Sufis are alike, and the Sufis preceding them were also like them. They do not know that this is an age of mischief and war, in which the kings practice tyranny, and everyone is involved in sinfulness and impiety. Hypocrisy has put pious people in doubt that Sufis are engaged in music and dancing. They should understand that even if the Sufis change, there will be no change in *tariqat*.

Saying of Abu Ali Quzwaini

Hadhrat Abu Ali Quzwaini said, "Sufism is the name of good manners and good deeds, and the servant always accepts the will of Allah Almighty."

Saying of Abul Hasan Nuri

Hadhrat Shaikh Abul Hasan Nuri (r.a.) said, "Sufism is the name for freedom, abstaining from artificiality, having generosity and the spending of wealth."

This means that a person should be freed from desire and greed. Bravery also means that he should not be proud of his own bravery and generosity. Abstaining from artificiality means that he should not be selfish in worldly actions. Generosity and munificence in the world is that worldly goods should be given to worldly people.

Saying of Abul Hasan Abu Shanja

Hadhrat Abul Hasan Abu Shanja (r.a.) said, "These days Sufism is a name without reality when in earlier times it was a reality without name."

In the time of the Respected Companions, this name (Sufism) was not in vogue, but its reality was in everyone's heart. Now only the name remains and the reality is missing. In other words, in earlier times reality (spiritual states) were present, and no one made assertations about them. Now there are many claimants but no reality.

Just these few sayings have been presented here about the reality of Sufism so that the way of Truth is opened wide for you (may God bless you), and you can catch the deniers of Sufism as to what they are saying. The name and its reality have no connection. But if anyone denies the reality of Sufism, then it is denying the whole *shariat* of the Prophet of Islam, and is the denial of his most loved virtues. I advise you (May Allah grant you goodness) to do full justice to it, be fair in all your actions, proclaim your shortcomings and have full faith in the Sufis, *Wa billahi taufiq*. May Allah guide you.

The pious ones should not be complacent on this way,
Their horses' legs will be cut in the stoney desert. [1]
But nor should the wine drinkers lose heart,
Suddenly, in one leap, they may reach their goal.

[1] Meaning, they should be prepared for trials.

Chapter Four

Wearing of Patched Garments

It may be mentioned that the Sufis often take to wearing patched garments which is the *Sunnah* (tradition) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) who said, "Take to wearing woollen clothes, and you will feel the sweetness of *iman* (faith)." One of the companions reported that "the Prophet used to wear wool and ride an ass." He said to Ayesha, may Allah be pleased with her, "Do not discard a garment until it is patched." Sayyidina Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "The Prophet, peace be upon him, had a garment with thirty patches on it." Umar also said that the best garment is the one which is the least troublesome. It is said that the Commander of the Faithful, Sayyidina Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, would tear off the sleeves of his shirt touching his fingers. Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, was commanded by God Almighty to simplify dress by saying: "And purify thy garments." [74:4]. Purification here means simplification.

Hasan Basri, may Allah be pleased with him says "I saw seventy Companions who had participated in the battle of Badr, clad in wool. The greatest Siddiq, Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, wore woollen garments in utter detachment from the world (*tajrid*). Hasan of Basrah has also said that he saw Salman (the Companion), may Allah be pleased with him, clad in a gown with several patches. The Commander of the Faithful, Sayyidina Umar bin al-Khattab, The Commander of the Faithful, Sayyidina Ali Abi Talib, and Hadhrat Harm bin Hayam, may Allah be pleased with them, are reported to have said that Uwais Qarni wore a garment with many patches on it. Hasan of Basrah, Malik bin Dinar and Sufyan Thauri, may Allah be pleased with them, used to wear patched wool. It has been mentioned in *Tarikhi-Mashaikh* by Muhammad bin Ali Hakim Tirmidhi that when the Imam of the world, Abu Hanifah wore woollen clothes and retired into

solitude, he was told in a dream by the Prophet (s.a.w.) to "come back and live among the people, because you are destined to revive my *Sunnah*." On this he renounced solitude and gave up wearing wool. But he used to wear very simple dress all the same.

Daud Tai who was one of the learned Sufis, used to wear wool.

Once Ibrahim bin Adham, clad in wool, went to see Imam Abu Hanifah, and was looked down on by the Imam's disciples because of his inferior dress. Abu Hanifah sensed this and said immediately, "Here comes Sayyidina (master) Ibrahim bin Adham." On this the disciples said, "Surely the Imam does not talk nonsense; but where is the sense in calling this man 'Sayyidina'? (i.e. 'Our Master') "

Abu Hanifah replied, "Because of his constant service, for he is engaged in serving God, while we are engaged in serving ourselves. This is how he becomes our master."

Nowadays, if some people take to wool for honour and glory without inner qualifications, it does not matter. It is like an army which is full of common people, but the commander-in-chief is one. Similarly every community is full of commoners while the elite are only a few. In this way those who resemble the Sufis even in a single aspect are known as Sufis. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said "He who imitates a community becomes one of that community."

That is the case with those who imitate the outer self of the Sufi. There are others who look for the inner qualities of the Sufis and come to know of the high spiritual standards and heights of Divine nearness of these people. Then they try to imitate the Sufis with the result that they get rid of the mischief of their own *nafs* and start making progress toward inner purification.

There is yet another category of people who look at the piety, peace of mind, and tranquillity of the Sufis and are impressed by their observance of the laws of *shariat*, good behaviour, and try to imitate them, and thereby reach some standard of purity. There are others who are impressed by their honesty of purpose, good manners, good conduct, contentment, good treatment of elders and the young and so on, and thus get attached to them with the result that they reform themselves to some extent. There is another category of people who are forced by cupidity and arrogance to seek honour without merit, and distinction without knowledge, and think that the Sufis are what they appear to be. Consequently they live with them for the sake of honour and reputation, although inwardly they have no inclination whatsoever for truth and purification, nor do they make any effort to get purified. They get exalted in the eyes of common people as real Sufis, but in reality they are nowhere near it. They try to conceal the inner crudeness by splendid garments which are, in reality, garments of deceit and hypocrisy which deserve nothing but disappointment in this world and punishment in the next.

God has said about these people in the Holy Qur'an:

"They are like asses laden with books." [62:5]

The present age is infested with people like these, you are therefore advised not to be like them. You should never aspire for anything which you do not deserve by your actions. You may try to accept Sufism a thousand times but Sufism will never accept you. It is not appearance, i.e. dress or *khirqat*, but endurance (merit, or *hirfat*) which makes a Sufi. If he is a real Sufi, his garments become garlands. If he is not, his patched frock (gown) is a message of destruction and a mandate for punishment on the Day of Judgement. A prominent shaikh was asked, "Why do you not wear patched garments?" He said, "It is hypocrisy to wear the Sufi dress and fear Sufi burden." If you wear the Sufi dress to be recognised by God as such, there is no need — for God can recognise you without that dress. If you want to show to the people that you are a Sufi, it is ostentation (*riya*) if you are a Sufi, and hypocrisy (*nifaq*), if you are not a Sufi, and that is very dangerous indeed. The Friends of God are above these considerations.

Someone has said, "Purity of mind is a gift (*inaam*) of God and wool is the clothing of beasts (*anaam*). These people regard appearance as a sign of nearness (of God). They decorate themselves in order to be called saints. That is why the Sufi shaikhs took to wearing wool and told their followers to do likewise, so that they are known by their dress, and if by chance, they commit a mistake, people would jump at their throats."

In short, the patched garment is the popular dress of the Friends of God, which glorifies the commoners and disgraces the elite. It is a source of glorification for the common people as they are held in esteem through it; and it is a disgrace for the elite because they do not like that honour and esteem. Therefore it is said that, "woollen dress is an adornment for the commoners (*awam*) and a degradation for the elect (*khawas*)." The common people use this dress as an instrument of earning wealth and honour, but the elect discard wealth and honour and give preference to self abasement and privation. Thus, what is honour for one group, is disgrace to the other, and vice-versa.

It is said: *"Al murraqqatu qamis al wafa li ahli safa, libas-us-surur li ahlil gharoor,"* which means, "The patched shirt is the dress of loyalty for the royalty (i.e. good natured), and dress of *saroor* (joy) for men of *gharoor* (arrogance)." The *ahli safa* (men of purity) surpass the limits of time and space by this dress and become detached from physical affinities — while the *ahli gharoor* (people of arrogance) are veiled from God's presence through the same dress and are ruined. The path of *salah* (improvement) and *falah* (success) is open for all. But while one chooses the way to *safa* (purity) and *ata* (prosperity), the other chooses the way to *ghata* (degradation) and *wata* (degeneration). I hope that both the parties will eventually be emancipated by dint of mutual love and companionship. For, the Prophet (s.a.w.) says *"Man ahabba qauman, fa huwa minhum."* (He who loves

a community is one of them.) This means that the lovers of each community will be with that community in the next world. But it is better to try to find reality and to refrain from formality, because a superficial observer can never find the truth.[1]

You should know that your mortal being (*bashriyat*) is a veil between you and God. And this veil cannot be removed without efforts and trials. And *safa* (purification) is the name of that *fana* (*fana* of *nafs*) which means annihilation of human qualities called *bashriyat*. So unless a seeker gets rid of human qualities, he cannot possibly don a dress of beautification or honour. Thus removal of *bashriyat* is the end of all trouble. Then you may call him a Sufi or give him any other name — it does not matter.

Method of Patching

The main considerations in patching clothes should be lightness and ease, and only that portion of the garment which is torn is to be patched. The opinion of the Sufi shaikhs is divided on this subject. Some are of the view that symmetry or regularity is unnecessary in patch work, and that the needle should be allowed to work freely. Others say that patching neatly and decoratively is necessary because neatness, cleanliness and doing a thing well is a prerequisite of Dervishhood. Once I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi, asked Shaikh al-Mashaikh (i.e. Elite of the Elites, or Guide of the Guides) Abul Qasim Gorgani in Tus, "What are the least possible requirements of dervishhood?" He replied, "There are three requirements which cannot be reduced: One, to patch the garment right; two, to hear rightly; and three, to step on the ground rightly." When we came out, my companions, who were present during that conversation, started discussing the shaikh's statement. Each had a high opinion of himself and thought that only he had understood the shaikh correctly. They came out with various explanations which were altogether wrong.

I told them that patching rightly means patching from the point of view of *faqr* (renunciation) not *zinat* (beautification), for even if you patch wrongly, it becomes right; hearing rightly means hearing in the state of *hal* (ecstasy), and not *kal* (vainglory) and interpreting intelligently not foolishly; and putting the step rightly means dancing in *samaa'* (devotional singing) in the state of *wajd* (ecstasy) and not ostentation (*lahw*), and formality (*rasm*). When someone brought this interpretation to the notice of the Shaikh, he exclaimed "Ali is right, may Allah bless him." Consequently, the wearing of patched garments means the avoidance of worldly formalities and attachment to God in utmost sincerity. It is reported authentically that Hadhrat Isa ibn Maryam, peace be upon him, was wearing a patched garment at the time of being lifted to heaven. One of the Sufi shaikhs saw him in that robe in a dream, and every patch was shining in Divine brilliance. He said, "O Prophet of God what is that light?" He said, "It is the light of my affliction,

[1] This passage has been left out by Nicholson

for, I sewed each patch in a state of intense affliction, and God Almighty has rewarded each affliction of mine with light (*nur*)."

Once I came across a shaikh in Transoxania who belonged to the Sufi sect called Malamatiya (self-reproachers). He did not eat what people generally eat, and contented himself with eating what people threw out as useless, such as rotten vegetables, carrots, and bitter pumpkins, etc. His garment was made of pieces of tattered clothes thrown away by people, and washed by him. Similarly, I heard there was a shaikh in recent years in Merv who was a man of spirituality and character par excellence. He had collected so many rags to make a prayer mat that scorpions had given birth to their young in them. My own shaikh (*pir*), may Allah be pleased with him, had a cloak full of irregular patches which he had been wearing for the last fifty years.

It is said that there were two Sufis in Iraq; one of them was a man of *mushahidah* (vision) and the other *mujahidah* (striving). The former did not wear anything except the clothes torn off in *samaa'* (mystical music) gatherings; and the other wore only those clothes which were torn off in the state of ecstatic convulsions. Thus, their exterior was strictly in accordance with their interior (spiritual state). And this is real dervishhood.

Shaikh Mohammed bin Hanif; may Allah be pleased with him, had worn coarse canvas for forty long years. Every year he would observe four periods of solitude each lasting for forty days; and in each period of solitude he would write a big book on Divine Secrets. There was another shaikh during that period called Mohammed Zakariya who was one of the greatest shaikhs of *Tariqat* and *Haqiqat*. He never wore a patched garment. When asked as to the conditions for wearing patched clothes, he replied, "The conditions for wearing such raiment are that Mohammed bin Zakariya wears a white shirt and that he fulfils the condition of wearing it."

Merits and Demerits of Wearing Wool and Other Patched Garments

It is by no means obligatory in Sufism to wear a particular brand of Sufi dress. The reason why some of the Sufis gave up woollen clothes was partly because procurement of wool had become scandalous, in that animals were being stolen everywhere; and partly because some of the misguided Sufis (*mubtadaa'* i.e. guilty of *bid'at* or near heresy) had started wearing that dress, and it is imperative in Islam to discard the dress of such folk even if it means discarding Sunnah (practice of the Prophet (s.a.w.)). But since the patched dress has come to be known as the attire of the Sufi shaikhs, they have invented a method of wearing it and at the same time avoiding being identified with the fake Sufis who indulge in objectionable practices under the garb of Sufism. What they do is to stitch the patches in a certain pattern so that it serves as a symbol or a mark of recognition among themselves while the pretenders remain unaware of it. Once a dervish went to a Sufi shaikh with the distinguishing mark stitched slightly inaccurately. On this the shaikh

dismissed him from his presence because his delicate temperament could not bear it. Crudeness is as repulsive to refined nature as an ugly verse is to a good poet.

There is another category of Sufi shaikhs who do not bother about dress at all. They have no objection to wearing what the Almighty gives them be it an *aba* (religious cloak) or *qaba* (royal coat). If He keeps them bare-bodied, they love it. And I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi, am in favour of this attitude, and have done likewise throughout my journeys. It is said that when Ahmad Khadhroya went to see Abu Yazid, may Allah be pleased with them both, he wore a *qaba*; and when Shah Shuja went to see Abu Hafs, may Allah be pleased with them both, he was also clad in a *qaba*. But the *qaba* was by no means their regular dress. They would sometimes wear wool, and sometimes white cotton if they could get it. This is because man is a slave of his habits, and develops a sort of love for them. And it is this love (for anything other than God) which turns into a veil between him and God. And that is precisely the reason why the Prophet, peace be upon him, said: "*Khair-us-siyam saumu akhi Daud Alaihissalam.*" (The best of all kinds of fasts is the fast of my brother Daud, may peace be upon him.) When he was asked to elaborate on it, he said, "He used to fast on alternate days," so that the *nafs* (lower self) does not get accustomed to any particular practice, because habit turns into a veil between man and God.

Still better, in this connection, is the example of Abu Hamid Mazoori, may Allah be pleased with him, who was so unmindful of attire, that he would neither object to any dress which his *murids* put around his body, nor would he mind if someone took it off when he was left alone.

There is a shaikh in Ghazni, may Allah protect him, by the name of Muayyid, who also is not particular about dress; and that is the correct attitude.

Reason for Wearing Blue Clothes

Now the reason why the Sufis generally wear blue clothes is partly because white clothes get easily dirty in travelling, and partly because they attract thieves. Another reason is that blue is the sign of death and mourning. Now because the world is a place of mourning, disappointments, grief and troubles, the seekers take to blue dress as a mark of mourning in the state of separation from the Divine Beloved. There is another category of Sufis who regard themselves as sinners and seeing no merit in themselves wear blue clothes as a mark of sheer disappointment with themselves.

One of the pretenders once asked a dervish the reason why he wore blue. He replied, "The Holy Prophet, may peace be upon him, left three things behind: Dervishhood (*faqr*), Knowledge, and the Sword. The Sword was taken by the rulers who misused it; Knowledge has been inherited by the *ulama* who did nothing more than teaching it; Dervishhood

has been adopted by the Sufis who utilised it to earn money; I am wearing blue to mourn the loss of these people."

It is said that Murtaish, may Allah be pleased with him was once passing through the streets of Baghdad. He felt thirsty and knocked at a door for water. A beautiful girl answered the door and gave him some water to drink. But his heart was so captivated by her beauty and he sat down there. When the owner of the house came and asked why he was sitting there, Murtaish said, "The girl gave me water to drink and robbed my heart." The owner then said, "She is my daughter and I give her to you in marriage." So he was taken inside, given a bath and good clothes to put on in place of the patched dress he was wearing. At midnight he got up for prayers. When he was in the middle of his prayers he heard a voice saying, "*Hatu muraqqah.*" (Give back my *muraqqah*— i.e. patched dress — to me.) When he asked what the matter was, the voice replied, "You looked at the girl once and We deprived you of that venerable garment (*muraqqah*), were you to cast another look, you would be deprived of the dress of friendship." This shows how auspicious is the dress you wear for the sake of God, and the Friends of God, and how important it is to live up to the ideal. But in case you violate the rules of friendship, you will be deprived of friendship. The *muraqqah* can be worn by two categories of persons: those who are detached from the world, and those who desire nothing but God.

It is a custom among Sufi saints to test a seeker for three years before they finally accept him as a *murid*. During the first year the seeker is asked to serve mankind; in the second year he is to serve God, and in the third year he is asked to keep watch over his own heart. For the seeker, service to mankind is possible only when he looks upon himself as a servant and upon the people as masters, irrespective of the fact whether they are rich or poor, superior or inferior; he has to regard everyone as superior to himself. If he regards himself as superior, he is not sincere in service and is liable to be condemned as a worldly man. And service to God is possible only when he cuts himself off from worldly connections, and is fully devoted to the Almighty, and serves God for His sake and not for the sake of anything else. And keeping a watch over the heart means that he concentrates his attention on God alone, and loves nothing but God. It is only when he fulfils these conditions that he is allowed to wear patched garments as a real Sufi and not merely as an imitator of others.

Qualifications of a Shaikh

The shaikh who allows the seeker to wear *muraqqah* should himself fulfil the following conditions: He should have attained spiritual perfection and should be fully conversant with the ups and downs of the spiritual journey. He should have personally experienced all the Sufi states, tasted the fruit of his devotion, and enjoyed the pleasures of Divine Beauty (*Jamal*) and the pangs of Divine Majesty (*Jalal*). Moreover he should be able to cast a glance at the seeker's heart and find out the extent to which he can travel. That

is to say he should be able to know beforehand if the seeker is, or is going to be, courageous enough to reach the goal. For, if he is going to fail, he should not be allowed to start the journey. If he thinks the seeker might falter, he should be given appropriate spiritual work to do. It should be remembered that a spiritual guide is like a physician who can kill a patient if he does not know his profession and gives him the wrong medicine to take and the wrong food to eat. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has said: "*Ash-Shaikhu fi yaumihi ka-al-Nabiyu fi ummatihi.*" (The shaikh in his community is like a *nabi* (prophet) in his *ummah.*) The prophets' treatment of their people was strictly based on spiritual insight (*basirat*). They gave them the food which they thought was conducive to good results.

It is for this reason that the shaikh has to try a *murid* for three years before permission is given to wear the *muraqqah*. It may also be understood that wearing of the *muraqqah* is governed by the same conditions as those wearing the *kafan* (shroud). That is to say, (like a dead man) he (the wearer of the *muraqqah*) should cut himself off from the pleasures of life, give up luxuries, dedicate his life to the service of God and abstain from covetousness. It is then that the shaikh can allow his *murid* to wear the *muraqqah* so that he (the *murid*) can do justice to it to the best of his abilities, and he allows nothing other than God to occupy his heart.

The Sufi shaikhs have given some subtle clues (*isharat*) in regard to the secrets of the *muraqqah*. Shaikh Abu Muammar Asfahani, may Allah be pleased with him, has in one of his books, written on the subject to clarify the issue since some people have been maligning it. We do not intend to reproduce all these sayings here. The gist of what the shaikhs have said is that the collar of the *muraqqah* represents patience (*sabr*), its two sleeves represent fear[1] (*khauf*) and hope[2] (*rija*), its two side pieces denote contraction[3] (*qabdh*) and expansion[4] (*bast*); its belt represents self abnegation, its seat (*kursi*) for firmness of belief, and its fringe for sincerity (*ikhlas*).

Commentary:
Note [1, 2] Fear (*khauf*) and hope (*rija*) are some of the spiritual states which the pilgrim or seeker experiences during his spiritual journey. It is said in a Hadith that one's faith should revolve between fear and hope. "*Al imanu bainal khaufi war-rija.*" That is to say a Sufi should not fear God so much that he becomes half dead and cannot do anything; nor should he be so hopeful of forgiveness (*maghfira*) as to become negligent. The best course is via the median between fear and hope.

Note [3,4] Contraction (*qabdh*) is another spiritual state which the seeker experiences during the spiritual journey. It happens that sometimes he loses spiritual elevation and falls down as one who is rejected. This is known as *qabdh* (lit: constipation). But when he is relieved of that state he regains elevation which is known as *bast* (expansion), that is to say, broadening of his chest (*sharah-i-sadr*). The best way to

come out of the state of *qabdh* is to go on working with hope and fear. It is soon removed. In the initial stages the two states are known as "Fear and Hope" (*khauf wa rija*). In the middle stage these are known as *qabdh* and *bast*, and in the final stage they are called *haibat* and *uns*. *Haibat* is the result of awe of Divine Majesty, and *uns* is the result of vision of Divine Beauty.

Better than the above saying is the following: The collar of the *muraqqah* stands for the coat of love, its sleeves for protection and chastity, the two sides for renunciation (*faqr*) and piety (*safwat*), its belt for perseverance in *mushahidah* (unitive life), its seat for peace in the presence of God, and its fringe for abiding in the state of union (*waslat*).

What is meant by all this is that the exterior (dress) should invariably correspond with the inner state of purification. I have written a book on this subject, which is useful for the seekers of truth.

Section

Reasons for Changing the Dress

However, there are some seekers who are overwhelmed by ecstasies of spiritual exuberance and tear their garments. This is excusable. But he who tears his Sufi dress deliberately is not fit to wear it again. If he wears it again, he is one of those who are Sufi in name and remain contented with the outward show and do not bother about inner purification.

Sometimes change of dress is necessitated by the change in spiritual status. In other words, when the Sufis advance from one stage to another, they give up the dress of the former stage and wear that of the latter as a mark of thanksgiving, for, each stage has a dress of its own. But the patched garment is common to all stages of Sufism, and he who discards it is supposed to have renounced all these stages. Although it is out of place to mention here the secrets of the various kinds of Sufi dress, which are being elaborated in the chapter on *Khirqah* and *Kashful hijab-as-samaa'*, I propose to describe them briefly so that the trend of thought is not cut off abruptly.

It is said that a shaikh who is authorised to accord permission for wearing of the Sufi dress should have the spiritual capability to transform an ignorant into a gnostic, and a sinner into a saint by a single glance of benevolence at him. Once I was travelling with my shaikh in Azerbaijan when I saw two persons in *muraqqah* standing close to a wheat stock in an agricultural farm and begging for wheat. The shaikh turned to them and recited the following verse from the Holy Qur'an:

"Those who sell piety for sin do not do good business." [2:16]

On this I asked the shaikh as to how those people had disgraced themselves. He said, "This is because they are greedy for money and their (so called) guides are greedy for more *murids*. But greed is greed, and no greed is better than another. This is because the so-called *pirs* (guides) lack proper qualifications to make *murids* who in turn cannot resist temptation. But the genuine shaikhs are not like that.

It is said that once Junaid, may Allah be pleased with him, was walking along a street. He came across an extremely handsome Christian youth and said, "Good Lord! Give him to me, for he is so good." A short while after, the boy came to him and said, "O Shaikh! Please bear witness that I embrace Islam." He was initiated as a *murid* and was trained to reach sainthood in due course. Shaikh Abu Ali Siyah, May Allah be pleased with him, was asked as to who is entitled to allow the wearing of *muraqqah*. He said, "He who is the Vicegerent of the Lord on earth, and nothing passes in the world without taking him into confidence."

In short, *muraqqah* is the dress of the pious and the sign of sainthood which has been discussed earlier. Now if greedy folks turn this dress into an instrument of collecting money, it is not the fault of the genuine Sufis.

Chapter Five

The Difference between *Faqr* (Dervishhood) and *Safwat* (Purity)

The opinion of the specialists on Sufism is divided on the question of superiority of *faqr* and *safwat*. Some of them hold that *faqr* is more perfect than *safwat*, while others are of the view that *safwat* is more perfect. The former give preference to *faqr* because it implies *fana-i-kul* (complete noughting of self), and that *safwat* is merely a stage in one of the stages (*maqamat*) of *faqr*. When *fana* is established, all the stages (*maqamat*) are nullified. This discussion is like the one on *faqr* and *ghina* (poverty and ownership) dealt with in one of the previous chapters. Those who give preference to *safwat* maintain that *faqr* is an existing reality which can be named, while *safwat* is pure *safa* (purity) or absolute non-existence called *fana*. And *faqr* is essentially *baqa* (abiding in God). Therefore *faqr* is one of the names of the stages and *safwat* is one of the names of perfection. The controversy has been prolonged in this age and every group has come out with fantastic claims with regard to the superiority or inferiority of *faqr* and *safwat*. As a matter of fact *faqr* and *safwat* are mere words which have been made out to be serious topics by those interested in verbosity. They disregard what is truth and promptly call annihilation (*nafi*) of the bare qualities as annihilation proper (*fana-fi-Allah*); and affirmation of good qualities as affirmation proper (*baqa-bi-Allah*). So, presence and absence or negation and affirmation are things of their own fantasy; but Sufism is something beyond these absurdities.

Briefly speaking, the saints (*auliya*) reach a status when the states and stations disappear, and there remains no cup and wine to describe the state of intoxication or sobriety; in fact intoxication and sobriety also disappear so that there is no language to speak of that experience, and everybody tries to express it in terms of his own liking, and says, this is superior and that is inferior, which is not a correct evaluation. Some are enamoured

by the word *faqr* and give preference to it because it is akin to humility and self abasement; others take a liking to *safwat* which is closer to self abnegation and purification. Actually the motive behind these words and phrases is to find a language by which they could express their inexpressible spiritual experiences, and assert their own individuality. The fact is that they may indulge in discussion about the difference between *faqr* and *safwat*, but real difference does not exist.

There is another section of debaters who are unaware of the Sufi path and their discussion is nothing more than a verbal exercise in futility. These are the people who are lost in the labyrinth of words and know nothing of reality. But those who have real knowledge do not bother about names. You may call them *faqirs* (men of *faqr*) or Sufis (men of *safwat*), it does not make any difference to them.

It may be mentioned that this discussion began at the time of Abul Hasan Samnun, who sometimes gave preference to *faqr* and sometimes to *safwat*. When he was asked to state the reason, he said, "When I am in the state of *baqa* I give preference to *safwat*, and when I am in the state of *fana* I give superiority to *faqr*, because *faqr* is the name of *baqa*, and *safwat* that of *fana*. So when I am in the state of *baqa*, (I go in the opposite direction and) I give preference to *fana*; and in the state of fana, I give preference to *baqa* simply because I want to get rid of both these terms."

It is all very well to say it, but the fact is that it is not possible to annihilate both *fana* and *baqa*. He who reaches the stage of *fana* loses himself; he who reaches the stage of *baqa*, regains his own individuality. Moreover, *fana* is a thing which cannot be exaggerated. Nobody can reach total *fana*, so when total *fana* is not possible, the question of its *fana* does not arise. So, all these discussions are meaningless, and exercises in futility. During my youth I composed a treatise on the subject, which I am going to reproduce in this book cautiously, may it please God Almighty.

Commentary: In this passage the author has touched one of the most intricate questions of the Sufi path concerning *fana* and *baqa*. What he means, and he voices the findings of the great Sufi Doctors, is that *fana* (the seeker's merger in the Divine Soul [Being]) is only relative and not real. There is no such thing as complete *fana*. The reason is that since God's Being is limitless, it is not possible for any seeker, even a prophet to come to the final end, because there is no end. Thus, nobody can be said to have reached the final stage, or the end of the journey since the journey is endless. So, what the author means here is that since real and complete *fana* is not possible, *fana* of *fana* is also not possible.

Similarly, *baqa* is relative, and there is no such thing as complete *baqa*, because no seeker can possibly be attributed with all the attributes of God Almighty. Therefore, the author says that those who speak of turning fana into *baqa* and *baqa* into *fana* do not know what they are saying.

This is the difference between *faqr* and *safwat* (purity). But, considered from the point of view of *tajrid* (detachment from the world) and *tafrid* (detachment from self), it is something else. It then turns into the question of the difference between *faqr* and *maskanat* (humility or indigence). Some of the *mashaikhs* (plural of shaikhs) have said that a *faqir* (one who adopts *faqr*) is superior to a *maskin* (one who adopts *maskanat*). They base their arguments on the verse of the Holy Qur'an: *"Li al fuqara ul lazina...."* (The *faqirs* who are firm in the way of God and do not go about to earn their livelihood [2:273]), in which God has praised the *faqirs*, and ordained that these are the people who deserve charity. For, a *maskin* is he who possesses, and a *faqir* is he who has renounced everything. That is why, they say, *faqr* is honour and *maskanat* dishonour. Therefore one who possesses is looked down upon in Sufism. The Prophet (s.a.w.) says: *"Tais abd-ud-dunya, tais abd-ud-dirham, tais abd-ud-dinar...."* (Down with he who is slave of wealth, down with he who is slave of money....) He who renounces the world is better than he who has it, since the former depends on God, and the latter on possessions.

There are others who think a *maskin* (humble) is superior to a *faqir*. They base their arguments on the Hadith: *Allahumma ahyini maskinun, wa amitni maskinun, wa ushirni fi zumratil masakin."* (O Lord, make me to live as a humble man, die with the humble, and to rise among the humble.) But as regards *faqr*, the Prophet (s.a.w.) said: *"Kadal faqr un yakunu kufran."* (*Faqr* is soon followed by *kufr* (heresy)).

Commentary: In this Hadith, *faqr* stands for poverty in its literal sense; and not spiritual poverty known as voluntary renunciation of all possessions. It is physical poverty, which the Prophet (s.a.w.) feared might lead to heresy.

In that case, *maskanat* would be superior to *faqr*. This viewpoint is supported by a section of the *fuqaha* (experts on *shariat* law), who think that a *faqir* is a man of *kafaf* (means) and a *maskin* is a man of *tajarrud* (destitution). It is for this reason that the Sufi shaikhs enjoying high status (*ahli maqamat*) regard the *masakin* (the humble) as real Sufis. In that case *safwat* is superior to *faqr*. This in brief is the controversy between *faqr* and *safwat*.

Chapter Six

Malamat (Self-Abasement)

A section of the Sufi shaikhs have adopted the way of self-abasement (*malamat*), which is the greatest weapon to ensure absolute sincerity in love (of God). All the followers of the Sufi path (*Ahli-haq*), in general, and the most prominent in particular, have always been the victims of ignominy. The Holy Prophet himself, peace be upon him, who is the head of all *Ahli-haq*, and leader of the lovers of God, was held in high esteem among the people of Makkah before he was honoured with prophethood and Divine Revelation (*wahy*). But as soon as he was bestowed with the robe of Friendship, he was subjected to all sorts of calumny and criticism. Some said he was a magician (*kahin*), some said he was a poet; others said he had lost his wits and so on. God Almighty has praised those who do not fear criticism in the following words:

"Wa la yakhaufun laumata lim....." (They do not fear calumny on the part of the calumnists. It is the grace of the Lord who favours those whom He pleases with it.) [5:57]

As a rule, God Almighty outwardly subjects to victimisation those who tread the path of God, but saves their inner-selves from being damaged. This is because the Most Benign Lord does not allow anybody to behold the inner beauty of His friends. Victimisation also prevents themselves from beholding their own beauty and becoming arrogant, for arrogance brings destruction. God Almighty, therefore, turns a section of people against them to reproach them. Then his own conscience (*nafsi lawwamah*) also joins his opponents and both his conscience and the opponents join hands to blame him for all his actions, good or bad. If he does bad deeds, it is his opponents who blame him — if his actions are good, it is his conscience which blames him for doing less that what he ought to have done. It is an admitted fact among the people following the path of God

(the Sufis), that no calamity or veil is harder in the path of Sufism than arrogance. Mind you, arrogance is generated both by others and the seeker himself — by others when he does good deeds and is praised, and by himself when he admires himself for his good deeds and falls a prey to arrogance. But God Almighty, in His grace protects His friends in this way, that their good deeds are not liked by people because God conceals the beauty of such actions from their sight. And if they strive hard along the path, they do not attribute it to themselves, but attribute it to God and are thus saved from the curse of arrogance. Therefore, he who is liked by God is not liked by the people, and he who is liked by the people is not liked by God. Similarly, Satan was liked by the angels and by himself. But since he was not liked by God he was cursed. On the other hand, Adam was not liked by the angels who criticised him in the following verse:

"O Lord, are you going to create one who will make mischief in the world." [2:30]

And he (Adam) was not pleased with himself as he said, "O Lord, we have done wrong with ourselves." [7:23]. Therefore, God was pleased with him by saying, "He did not do it intentionally so overlook it." Now because neither the angels nor he himself approved of his own actions, God approved of him, so that the world should know that he who is approved by God, is rejected by the world, and he who is rejected by God is approved by the world. This shows defamation is really a blessing in disguise for the Friends of God, who prefer defamation to seek God's pleasure, as opposed to worldly people who feel happy when they are approved by the world. The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, says, "God said, 'My friends are hidden under my cloak and nobody knows them except My friends.' "

The Causes of *Malamat* (Defamation)

The causes of *malamat* are three-fold:

1. It is the result of good deeds not liked by people.

2. It is the result of deeds which are not against *shariat* but appear to be against *shariat*.

3. It is the result of wilful violation of the laws of *shariat*.

In the first case, the *auliya-Allah* (Friends of God) are vilified by the wicked people even when they do good deeds. But they exercise patience and do not care. The second kind of defamation takes place when the *auliya-Allah*, as a result of the honour and respect paid to them by people, feel embarrassed or irritated and do such deeds as appear to be against *shariat*—but are not against it in reality—thus causing people to hate them and turn away from them.

Commentary: An example of this kind of behaviour is that once a shaikh went out for a walk with a large number of admirers following him. He came across some ladies on the way. He selected one of them, took her to a nearby mosque and closed the door. Seeing this, all of the admirers went away complaining against his behaviour. When he came out he saw that there was only one of his disciples left there, and the shaikh addressed him thus: "I got sick of the crowd and wanted to test them. I asked the ladies of my house to go out and meet me on the road. The one I selected and took to the mosque was my own wife. This is how I got rid of the useless crowds who were wasting my time."

Another instance is that when Shaikh Abu Bakr Shibli's son died, he put on the clothes of mourning and shaved off the hair on his head. Seeing this, nobody turned up to offer condolence, although he had a huge following in Baghdad. When one of his friends asked the reason for his queer conduct, he said, "I did this to save my time and save my admirers from hypocrisy, because the whole crowd would have turned up, each one saying, 'I am sorry over the death of your son,' whereas the sorrow is exclusively mine and mere lip service would be hypocrisy."

The third reason for *malamat* is when someone is really misguided and violates the laws of *shariat*, but tries to take cover behind the cult of *malamat* (self-abasement), showing to the world that his actions are based on self-vilification. But those who are genuinely devoted to God, and are opposed to hypocrisy, do not fear public opinion and stick to the right path come what may.

More Examples of *Malamat*

It is related that once Shaikh Abu Tahir Iraqi was passing through a bazaar mounted on an ass with a *murid* holding the reins when someone shouted, "Here comes the heretic!" This infuriated the *murid* who jumped to punish the man, but the shaikh intervened and said, "I am going to show you something which will remove your indignation." On reaching home he asked his *murid* to bring a box which was full of letters addressed to the shaikh. He opened it and said to the murid, "Look here in all these letters so many people have extolled me and given me the titles of: Shaikh-al-Islam, Shaikh Zaki, Shaikh Zahid, Shaikh-al-Haramain, and what not. But I am not at all worthy of these titles. Everyone of the writers has admired me on the basis of his own opinion. Now if the poor man has dared to express his opinion against me, what is the harm."

But the best example of wilful defamation and hatred of position and status is that of Amirul Mu'minin Uthman bin Affan, may Allah be pleased with him. He had four hundred servants, but came home one evening from his palm garden carrying a bundle of firewood

on his head. When he was asked the reason, he said, "*Uridu an ujarribu nafsi.*" (I wanted to test my *nafs* [ego]). This shows that the idea of false prestige did not come in the way of self-humiliation.

Akin to this is the story of Imam Abu Hanifah which will be related in the chapter devoted to him.

It is said that when Shaikh Abu Yazid returned from *hajj* (pilgrimage to Makkah) during the month of Ramadhan (fasting), large crowds of people gathered to receive him with all the honour and respect due to a great saint like him. But fearing lest his ego and pride should overtake him to the detriment of his devotion to God, he took out a piece of bread from his pocket and started eating, quite contrary to the practice of Muslims in the month of fasting. Seeing this disrespect for the sanctity of the sacred month on his part, the whole crowd got angry and soon disappeared not knowing that being a traveller he was not duty-bound to fast that day under the law of *shariat*.

But I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi say that today it is no longer necessary to indulge in such somersaults to defame yourself. You just sit in a mosque and prolong your *nawafil* (supererogatory prayer), or devote yourself fully to religion and people would automatically give you the title of a hypocrite and pretender. But if you deliberately violate the laws of *shariat* for the sake of self-defamation, it is a serious crime, open mischief, and a clear disregard for religion, which is common nowadays. These are the people to whom rejection of the people is really meant to win them over. They do not realise that by rejecting people for winning popularity, they only harm themselves unconsciously. Once I happened to stay with one of these pretenders. One day he committed a sin and said he had done it for *malamat*. Hearing this a man said, "It is absurd." But he did not like this remark and felt angry. On this I said to him, "My dear man, if you are right you should appreciate this criticism because this is also *malamat*. Why should you take ill of it? But mind you, since your aim is to guide people, true guidance is possible only when your conduct is in accordance with *shariat*—you cannot guide people to *shariat* by violating it. It is sheer heresy."

Merits of *Malamat*

It may be mentioned that Shaikh Abu Hamdun Qassar is one of the most famous advocates of the cult of *malamat*. He says, "*Al malamatu tark al salamat.*" (To practice *malamat* is to give up *salamat* [peace]). That is to say, there is no peaceful living in adopting the cult of *malamat*. When you deliberately bid farewell to peaceful living, you invite calamity, destroy your peace of mind, deprive yourself of all the amenities and pleasures of life and get completely cut off from the world, with the result that you come face to face with God's Majesty (*Jalal*). In this way, the more detached you are from the world, the more attached you are with God.

Commentary: Majesty (*Jalal*) and Beauty (*Jamal*) are two opposite Attributes of the Divine Lord. Here when the author says that a Malamatiya shaikh comes face to face with Divine Majesty, he means that by disdaining the path of peace, and choosing the path of troubles, he deliberately invokes the harsh attribute of *Jalal* which he is able to bear, as opposed to the beatific attribute of *Jamal* which is reserved only for the weak-minded Sufis. It may be added that although it is harder to deal with *Jalal* than with *Jamal*, the Sufis inviting *Jalal* are closer to God that those who invite the beatific attribute. The former is like sitting close to the fire and getting burnt, while the latter is like sitting at a safe distance from it to enjoy its warmth. So, when the entire world goes in for ease and comfort, the Malamatiya turn their back on it. Their aspirations are opposed to the aspirations of the rest of the people. This is because the Malamatiya behaviour is unique in every respect.

Consequently, Shaikh Ahmad Fatik says that someone asked Hallaj as to who is a Sufi. His reply was, "*As-Sufi-o-wahdani-uz-zat.*" (A Sufi is a unique being.) Abu Hamdun himself has said that the way of *malamat* is extremely hard and rigorous. But I will say something about it, "It is the hope of the Murjiya and the fear of the Qadariya." As this passage is difficult to understand, I will proceed to explain it. Man's nature is basically opposed to anything which stands in his way to God. And the greatest hurdle between him and God is his popularity, because it is the nature of man that if someone loves him he is prepared to sacrifice everything for that person. So when a seeker is popular among the people, his love for them leaves no room for the love of God in his heart (as it is fully occupied with the love of people who love him). So a seeker is afraid of popularity as much as a Qadariya.

Commentary: The Qadariya sect believe that man has free will to do anything he likes, unlike the Jabriya who believe in predestination. Therefore the Qadariya is always afraid of violating the law of *shariat* and avoiding sin. The Murjiya, are those who believe man obtains salvation through God's mercy and not deeds. Therefore they always entertain pious hopes of God's mercy and abstain from good deeds. What the saying: "A Malamatiya has the hope of a Murjiya and the fear of Qadariya," means is that the Malamatiya are always afraid of being popular (like the Qadariya), because popularity takes them away from God, and they are hopeful (like the Murjiya) because after ignoring popularity, their only hope lies in God's mercy.

Someone has beautifully said: *"Ajidu malamtun fi hawaka lazizatun li anna malamata rouzatul ashiqin wa tarhatul muhibbin wa rahatul mushtaqin wa saroorul muridin."*

(I find sweetness in *malamat* in Thy love, for *malamat* is the rose-garden of the lovers, common resort of the enthusiasts, pleasure of Thy affectionates, and joy of Thy seekers).

The Malamatiya are, therefore, the only people in the universe who love physical torture for spiritual pleasure, and none among men and angels can ever attain to their status, nor did the ascetics, worshippers and lovers of God among the followers of other prophets enjoy this distinction.

But I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi, consider *malamat* as *riya* (ostentation), which is nothing but hypocrisy. For, those who indulge in *riya*, do everything to attract people, and those who indulge in *malamat* do everything to repulse people. Both of the sects are engaged with people and cannot leave them. On the other hand, a dervish has nothing in his heart except God, and, therefore, he is above *malamat* or popularity. Once I happened to be in the company of a *malamati* in Mawara-un-Nahr (Transoxania). In a buoyant mood I said to him, "What is the purpose behind your acts of violence." He said, "To get rid of mankind." I said, "Mankind is vast—your span of life is extremely short. How can you negate the whole of mankind in your lifetime? The best way is to negate yourself so that you get rid of everybody (and everything)."

There is another group of people who have engagements with people, but think that people have engagements with them. The best way to avoid being seen is to close your own eyes so that everything is non-existent for you. The whole trouble springs from your eyes. Why should you have to do anything with anyone other than God. If he who believes in the axiom: "Prevention is better than cure," resorts to medicine he is not wise.

There are yet others who like *malamat* for the sake of self mortification. That is, they seek purification of soul by being degraded and insulted. It is related of Ibrahim bin Adham that when someone asked him, "Did you ever see your heart's desire being fulfilled?" He replied, "Yes, twice; once I was travelling in a boat clad in tatters. My hair had grown long and was flowing in all directions. In short, I was in such a bad condition that all the occupants of the boat were laughing at me and joking. Among them was a jester who would come every now and then to pull and pluck my hair, and was guilty of all sorts of absurdities and mischief. It was then that I was extremely pleased. But my happiness knew no bounds when he rose and put water over my head."

"On another occasion, I was travelling on a winter night. It was raining heavily, my clothes were drenched with water, and I was shivering with cold. I went to a mosque to take shelter and was turned out. I went to another mosque and met the same fate. I went to the third mosque and was pushed away. Not knowing what to do in that biting cold, I dashed to a bath and spread my garment over the fire with the result that all my clothes, face and body became black with smoke. That was another occasion when my heart's desire was met."

I, ʿAli bin Uthman al-Jallabi had the same experience when I had a problem to solve. I did my best to find a solution thereof, but failed. Once before, I was faced with the same difficulty which was removed when I went and stayed at the shrine (*maqam*) of Shaikh Abu Yazid, may Allah be pleased with him. Therefore, I went there this time, and stayed there for three months, taking a bath (*ghusul*) three times and making ablution (*wudhu*) thirty times daily. But the problem was not solved, and I decided to go to Khurasan, and stayed in a village where there was a *khanqah* (convent) with some seekers under training. Although I was wearing a dark *muraqqah*, they thought I was not one of them—and it is true I was not one of them—but I had no alternative but to stay with them. They lodged me on a roof, themselves being on a roof higher than that. They gave me a dry piece of bread which had turned green, and I could smell the aroma of good food they were enjoying on top. Not only that, they jeered at me as well, and passed ugly remarks.

The climax was reached when they flung peels of the melons they were eating in order to belittle me and dignify themselves. I said, "O Lord, had it not been for the dress of friendship (of Allah) which they wear, I could not have been able to bear that treatment." But the more they indulged in absurdities, the greater was my happiness, so much so that my inner problem was solved by their rough treatment. It then dawned upon me why the *mashaikh* (saints), allow ignorant fools to live with them, and tolerate their misconduct. This is, in brief, the result of my research (*tahqiq*) on *malamat*, which I have been able to place before you with the help of God, the Most High and Most Glorious.

CHAPTER SEVEN

Leading Companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

Now I will mention briefly the spiritual attainments of some of the leading companions of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, who were the predecessors, guides, leaders and pioneers of the Sufi path next to the Prophet, so that with the help of God Almighty their example may strengthen your determination.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr as-Siddiq

Hadhrat (His Eminence) Abu Bakr as-Siddiq (the veracious), the best of mankind after the prophets, the Shaikh al-Islam, caliph, *imam* (leader), is the head of *ahl tajrid* (renouncers of the world) and Lord of *ahl tafrid* (renouncers of themselves). He is known for his supernatural acts (*karamat*) and subtle sayings on the mysteries of the Sufi path. As a result of his quiet nature, the Sufi shaikhs regard him as the head of *Arbab-i-Mushahidah* (those enjoying God's vision), and Hadhrat Umar as the head of *Arbab-i-Mujahidah* (those engaged in the rigours of spiritualism) because of his vigorous and rigorous nature. It is related in authentic traditions, and the *ulama* know it, that he recited the Qur'an silently during the night, while Hadhrat Umar recited it loudly. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) asked Hadhrat Abu Bakr why he recited silently he replied, "He whom I pray to is the best listener. When my Lord is always with me, it matters little whether I recite silently or loudly." When Hadhrat Umar was asked the reason for why he recited loudly he said, "To alert the sleeping ones and to scare Satan." This attitude of his speaks of *mujahidah*, and that of Hadhrat Abu Bakr of *mushahidah*. And the state of *mujahidah* is like a drop in the ocean in comparison with the state of *mushahidah*. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said to Hadhrat Umar, "Your merits

are only a fraction of Hadhrat Abu Bakr's." Now when Hadhrat Umar, who is the glory of Islam, enjoyed only a fraction of Hadhrat Abu Bakr's greatness, you can imagine in what proportion the rest of mankind stands in comparison to Hadhrat Abu Bakr.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr is reported to have said, "Our world is a short life, our powers are not our own, our breaths are numbered and our laziness is only too vivid." It is therefore sheer folly to boast of worldly grandeur which is transitory, of the powers which are not our own and of life which is short. He has also said, "*Dunya* (the world) is not a fit place to be enamoured of, since your attachment with *fani* (transient) means your detachment from the *baqi* (eternal)." The Friends of God renounce both this world and their own *nafs* because both are veils between God and themselves. Likewise they abstain from what is not their own and belongs to others, because to rely on others' property is folly.

Hadhrat Abu Bakr also said, "O Lord, give me much of the world and then enable me to renounce it." The reason why he wanted plenty of the world first and then sought the ability to give them up is that he wanted *dunya* so that he would be gifted with the ability to thank God, and then give away everything to the poor in God's love, and thus combine two virtues namely, *shukr* (gratitude) and *anfaq* (charity). This prayer on his part implies the benefit of *sabr* (patience) as well, for renunciation is always followed by *faqr* (poverty) which then becomes voluntary (*ikhtiari*) and not compulsory (*iztarari*). But this acceptance of voluntary poverty is against the saying of a Sufi shaikh who is of the opinion that compulsory *faqr* is more perfect than voluntary *faqr*, because if poverty is voluntary it is then the creation of the seeker, but if it is compulsory the seeker is then the creation of poverty. Now, because voluntary poverty involves activity on his part it is always better to abstain from activity and resign oneself to passivity.

But I am of the opinion that voluntary *faqr* is better than compulsory because you give away everything for the sake of God out of free will, but in case of compulsory poverty you are poor by the force of circumstances and your option of free will does not at all come into play. Moreover, when your poverty is compulsory you are forced to go about begging at the doors of tyrants and the rich which is not desirable or virtuous under any circumstances. Now, because Siddiq Akbar (Hadhrat Abu Bakr) is the best of all men after the prophets, nobody has the right or status to challenge his verdict about the superiority of voluntary poverty over compulsory poverty. Moreover, all the Sufi shaikhs except the one mentioned above, are in agreement with the view point of Hadhrat Abu Bakr as-Siddiq.

Imam Zuhri said that when Hadhrat Abu Bakr was elected as the successor of the Prophet (s.a.w.) he addressed the people in the following words, "By God, I was never fond of leadership for a single day or a single night, nor did I ever beseech the Almighty openly or in private to bestow upon me the distinction of leadership, nor do I feel any pleasure in it." When a slave of God attains the distinction of *sidq* (friendship) and he happily settles down in peace and contentment, he has no desire but to leave everything to God and whatever happens to him he is fully satisfied. If the Almighty wants him to live in

poverty he accepts it cheerfully. If He makes him wealthy he is equally cheerful and abstains from exercising his option under any circumstances. Hadhrat Abu Bakr remained the embodiment of humility and submission from the beginning to the end, so that he remains as the perfect model of all Sufi doctrines be it *tajrid* (renunciation), *tamkin* (sobriety), *walayat* (sainthood), *faqr* (asceticism) and acceptance or rejection of leadership. This is because he is the leader of mankind in general, and the Sufi shaikhs in particular. May Allah be pleased with him.

Hadhrat Umar bin al-Khattab

Hadhrat Umar bin al-Khattab, was the commander of the faithful (*ahl-i-iman*), leader of those having the status of *ihsan* (being in God's presence), the *imam* of those who have realised the Truth (*ahl-i-tahqiq*) and the guide of lovers gone deep in the ocean of Divine love. He is famous for his *karamat* (spiritual eminence) and *farasat* (spiritual insight), and had a large number of mystical truths to his credit. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "*Al Haqqu yantiqu ala lisanil Umar*" (God speaks through the tongue of Umar). The Prophet (s.a.w.) also said, "There have been *muhaddithin* (foretellers) among the followers of the previous prophets, and if there is any in my ummah, it is Umar." He has expressed such a great number of mystical truths that it is not possible to exhaust them in this book. He said, "*al uzlatu rahatun min khaltai-sue.*" (Solitude is safety from bad company).

Solitude (*uzlah*) is of two kinds:
(i) disregard of mankind,
(ii) total boycott.

Disregard of mankind is a sort of retirement from public life to avoid bad company and scrutinising one's own faults for protecting oneself from others and from oneself. But total boycott is something spiritual and involves mental rather than physical detachment from the world. In that state although one is living with people physically, one is alone spiritually. This is an extremely high state and the man of this status follows exactly on the footsteps of Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, who found pleasure in solitude, although outwardly he was the Commander of the Faithful and lived among them.

This is clear proof of the fact that the men of God (*ahl-i-batin*) have always been attached with people and were detached from them internally (spiritually) and thereby fully attached with God spiritually. Whatever little dealings they have with people, they regard it as *bala'* (misfortune or calamity) and try to render it ineffective by constantly living in God's presence (spiritually), because the world is never free from corruption in the eyes of the Friends of God. As Hadhrat Umar has said, "It is not possible for a house founded on corruption to be free from corruption." Hadhrat Umar is one of the choicest of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and one of the select admitted to Divine Presence, so much so that Jibrail, peace be upon him, came and said to the Prophet

(s.a.w.), "O Muhammad, all the angels send you greetings on the conversion of Umar to Islam." The Sufi community follows the example of Hadhrat Umar in wearing wool and undergoing hardships of Islamic life since he is the *Imam* (leader) of mankind. May Allah be pleased with him.

Hadhrat Uthman bin Affan

Hadhrat Uthman bin Affan who is an embodiment of modesty, is one of the greatest devotees attached to God and illuminated by the Prophet's company. His merits and virtues are too well known to need description. Abdullah bin Rabah and Abu Qatada, may Allah be pleased with them, have narrated the following story:

When Uthman's house was besieged, we were with him. When the rebels flocked around him, his servants took up arms to defend him, but he set everybody free to go wherever they liked. So we ran away to save our lives. On the way, we met Hasan bin Ali, may Allah he pleased with him, and came back with him to find out for what purpose Hasan had come. Hasan greeted Uthman and said, "You are the true *Imam* (caliph) and I am ready to fight those who are opposed to you as soon as you say yes." His reply was, "O the son of my brother, go back and sit in your house, I am not prepared to cause bloodshed in the *ummah* without God's consent." This is the sign of his submission in the event of a calamity and indicates the height of his friendship (*khullat*) with God. This is like prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, who at the time of being flung into the fire was asked by Jibrail, "Is there anything you need that I can do for you?" He said, "Yes, but not from thee." Jibrail said, "Why don't you invoke God's mercy?" He said, "He knows my condition and I need not speak. He knows better what is good for me." The same was the case with Hadhrat Uthman. He was facing rebellion instead of the fire of Ibrahim, and Hasan tried as Jibrail did to save him. But while Ibrahim was saved, Uthman was murdered. Ibrahim's safety is *baqa* and Uthman's surrender is *fana* of which we have said a lot before. Uthman is the model of the Sufis so far as sacrificing life and property for the love of God, and sincerity in worship are concerned. He is truly the *Imam* of mankind in the domain of *shariat*, *tariqat* and *haqiqat*.

Hadhrat Ali bin Abi Talib (The Fourth Caliph)

Hadhrat Ali bin Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him, the cousin of the Holy Prophet, (s.a.w.), is the head of all the Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*). He enjoys one of the highest and the most exalted positions in the domain of spirituality. His sayings and anecdotes speak of an intensely deep *hal* (spiritual ecstasies). It is on this account that Master Junaid, may Allah be pleased with him, has said, "*Shaikhu-na-fil usul wal bala Ali al-Murtaza*." (Ali, the chosen of God is our shaikh [master] in the principles of the Sufi Doctrine and also in the tolerance of calamities). That is to say, he is the most perfect

guide in Sufism and in bearing the adversities of the Path, since by the word *usul* the Sufis mean the Sufi Doctrine.

Commentary: Out of the four main spiritual orders: Chishtiya, Qadriya, Suharwardiya and Naqshabandiya, the first three originate from Hadhrat Ali ibn Abi Talib, may Allah be pleased with him. Even the fourth *silsila* Naqshabandiya is indirectly connected with him and he can safely be called the head and guide and leader of the entire Sufi community in the world.

Once a person came to him and asked him for advice. He said, "Do not worry much about your wife and children; for if they are the Friends of God, He will look after them; if they are His enemies, you need not worry about His enemies." This is with reference to the Sufi doctrine that nothing other than God should occupy one's heart. It should be left to God in whatever way He treats His people. Hadhrat Musa, peace be upon him, left his wife, the daughter of prophet Shuib, peace be upon him, in awful conditions with full trust in God that He would look after her. Similarly, Hadhrat Ibrahim, peace be upon him, took his wife Hajjar and his child Ismail to a desert and entrusted them to God's care. These are the people who had no place in their hearts for anything other than God. Since they were fully devoted to God, they received the greatest rewards without asking for it, and by placing full trust in Him. This is akin to another saying of Hadhrat Ali who when asked what was the best occupation, replied, "*Ghina-al-Qalb bi-Allah*" (It is being rich with God). For he who is rich with God, absence of wealth does not make him poor nor does its presence makes him happier. This has been already explained in the chapter on *faqr* and *safwat*. So, Sufis had better follow closely what Hadhrat Ali has said to be able to renounce this world and the hereafter.

Commentary: Renunciation of the hereafter means that the pilgrim should be the seeker of God in all his actions and in the gains of this world or the next. This is the height of love and sincerity with God.

CHAPTER EIGHT

The Imams of the House of the Prophet (s.a.w.)

Every member of the house of the Prophet, peace be upon him, was gifted with inherent purity and enjoyed a high status in spirituality, so that everyone of them was a perfect guide of the Sufi community. I shall deal with only a few of them for the sake of brevity.

Imam Hasan bin Ali al-Murtaza

Hadhrat Imam Hasan bin Hadhrat Ali who was the peace of the heart of the Prophet (s.a.w.), the light of the eyes of Ali al-Murtaza, and pleasure of the heart of Zahra (the Prophet's daughter), enjoyed an extremely high position in *tariqat* (Sufism). His sayings are full of spiritual wisdom. It is he who said on his death bed, "*Alaikum bi hifzis-sarair fa in-Allaha mutlau ala-al-zamair*" (Guard your *sarair* [secrets] for Allah knows your *zamair* [minds]). In fact guarding of Divine Secrets is as important as guarding of minds. What is guarding of secrets? It is nothing but keeping your self away from everything other than God. And guarding of the mind consists in abstaining from every act contrary to the will of God.

When the Qadarites (believers in free will) rose to power and their cult of Mu'tazilah became popular, Imam Hasan of Basrah, may Allah be pleased with him, wrote the following letter to Hadhrat Imam Hasan bin Ali asking his opinion about predestination and free will:

"I begin with the name of Allah, the most Merciful and most Gracious. O, the son of the Prophet, and the light of his eyes, may Allah shower his blessings on him and you. You

the descendants of Hashim are like a ship on a stormy ocean, or like a lamp in a dark night, and are commissioned to guide those striving in the dark for a lead. Please guide us and show us the right path in regard to the controversy on predestination (*jabr*) and free will (*qadr*) raging among Muslims, because you are the descendants of the Prophets generation after generation, and the custodians of true knowledge and true guidance."

Imam Hasan bin Ali sent the following reply:

"I begin with the name of Allah, the most Merciful and most Gracious. I received your letter indicating your anxiety over the controversy, and the state of bewilderment prevailing in the *ummah*. I am firmly of the opinion that he who does not believe in predestination of good and evil (like the Qadarites) is an infidel; and he who attributes evil to the Almighty (like the Jabarites) is a sinner. He who does good, does so by his free will, and he who commits a sin, does so of his own accord. But still Allah is the Supreme Lord. Although He has given you the brain to decide, He is still the Ruler over your brain. He does not stop any man from doing good, nor does He force anyone to commit a sin. At the same time, He has the power to prevent man from committing sin, but if He does not prevent him, it does not mean that He has forced him to do so. This is where the Jabarites have erred. Allah Almighty has given man the discretion to decide what is good and what is evil. He has also given him the power to do good and avoid evil. Thus His policy remains unrefutable. *Wassalam.*"

This means that he who does not attribute the power to do good or evil to God is not a Muslim. And one who ascribes evil to God is a sinner. That is to say those who disbelieve in predestination are Qadariya (Qadarites) and those who attribute evil to God are Jabriya (Jabarites). Man is free to act in accordance with the (limited) power given to him by God. And our religion (Islam) is between *Jabr* and *Qadr*. This is the crux of the problem which I wanted to be made known. I have quoted the whole letter to show Imam Hasan's knowledge of the secrets (*haqaiq*) of Islam.

Commentary: The correct Islamic position has already been explained earlier. It would suffice here to say that when Hadhrat Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq was asked to explain this issue he said, "*Al amru bainal amrain*"— The truth lies in between the two. Another saying in this respect is: "*Mukhtarun fi fialihi wa majburun fi ikhtiyarihi.*" (Man is free to will, but he cannot will what he wills). Hadhrat Ali said something to this effect when he told the questioner to raise his foot. When he did so, he said "Now raise the other foot also." When the person could not do it, he said that this was the true position about *qadr* and *jabr*.

In the Holy Qur'an it is said that the author of all that is good is God, and the author of all that is evil is man. This is because man is the combination of the body and soul. The body belongs to the earth and pulls him down, while the soul is of

Divine origin and pulls him up. If the lowerself is overpowered by the angelic self (the soul) he succeeds; whereas if the lowerself overpowers the soul, he is ruined. Now because the soul by nature is the force which pulls him up, man's actions performed according to the dictates of the soul (which are necessarily good) are rightly attributed to God and the bad actions which are performed under the dictates of the lowerself are rightly ascribed not to God but to man himself, that is to say, his lowerself. In this respect Khawaja Ghulam Farid's statement quoted in *Isharat-i-Farida (Maqabis al-Majalis)* is, "In the realm of *majaz* (phenomenon) man is free to act, but in the realm of *haqiqat* (reality) he is not." This is really what is meant by saying that the truth lies in between *jabr* and *qadr*. Man is responsible for his actions to the extent of his limited powers and not more.

It is said that once Imam Hasan, may Allah he pleased with him, was sitting in the courtyard of his house in Kufah, when a villager came and started abusing him and his parents. Imam Hasan got up and said, "My dear man! Are you hungry or thirsty? Should I bring you food and drink?" But he went on hurling abuses on him and his parents. Even so the Imam remained calm and told his servant to go into the house and bring a bag full of silver for him. When the bag was brought the Imam said, "I am sorry, there is nothing more than this at the moment in my house. If I had more, I would not have spared it." On hearing this the villager said, " I am now convinced that you are the son of the Prophet, peace be upon him. I came here to verify it by testing your patience." Indeed it is one of the signs of the *auliya-Allah* (Friends of God) and *mashaikh-i-tariqat* that they are equally indifferent to both admiration and vilification.

Imam Hussain bin Ali al-Murtaza

Hadhrat Imam Hussain bin Hadhrat Ali al-Murtaza is another member of the house of the Prophet, peace be upon him, who is one of the great *auliya-Allah* devoted exclusively to God and famous for renunciation, patience and forbearance in the hour of extreme affliction, such as experienced in the massacre of Karbala. The *ahl-i-haq* (*auliya-Allah*) are agreed on the fact that Imam Hussain was the man who stood for Truth all his life and sacrificed his life for Truth. The Prophet himself, (s.a.w.) has indicated some of Imam Hussain's spiritual merits in his sayings. It is reported by Hadhrat Umar, may Allah be pleased with him, that once he saw young Hussain sitting on the back of the Prophet (s.a.w.) with the Prophet holding a string in his mouth and walking on his knees like a camel. Umar said, "What a good camel." The Prophet (s.a.w.) replied, "What a good rider! O son of Abdullah!"

Imam Hussain also has some subtle sayings on the mysteries of the Sufi path. He said "*Ashraful Ikhwani alaik dinakum,*" which means, your best friend is your faith (*din*), because man's emancipation lies in faith (religion), and his destruction in opposing it.

So a wise man is he who obeys his well wishers and does not oppose them, for they are like brothers to you who never reject you.

It is said that once a man came to Imam Hussain, may Allah be pleased with him, and said, "O the son of the Prophet, I am a poor man with a large family. Kindly give some thing to me to suffice for the night." He said, "Sit down. The money is on the way." After a short while a man arrived and placed before him five bags each containing a thousand dinars (sterlings) saying that Amir Muawiyah had sent the money and wanted Imam Hussain to utilise it sparingly since there was a shortfall in his budget (Amir Muawiyah was the governor of Syria). Imam Hussain ordered the man to give the entire amount to the beggar and addressed him thus, "I am sorry to have kept you waiting for long. Had I known that the amount was so little, I would not have troubled you to wait. Please forgive me the inconvenience caused to you. We are the people called *ahli-bala* (sufferers). We love *bala* (calamities) and feel pleased with it. We live for others and not for ourselves." His merits are only too well known in the *ummah* to be enumerated here.

Abul Hasan Ali Zainal Abidin

Abul Hasan Ali Zainal Abidin bin Hussain bin Ali al-Murtaza, may Allah be pleased with him, was the best and the greatest devotee of his time. He is famous for unveiling the mysteries and secrets of the Sufi path. He is reported to have said, "If you are fortunate you should be driven to misdeeds by fortune. If you are unfortunate you should be driven by misfortune to give up what is right." And this is one of the merits of those who have reached perfection in the Sufi path. What the saying means is that it is wrong to be misled either by fortune or misfortune, for a *mu'min* is never misled.

It is said that when his father Imam Hussain was martyred along with his sons, Ali Zainal Abidin was the only male left alive to look after the females. Because at that time he was indisposed and could not take part in the battle. On being brought to Damascus (the seat of Yazid's government) on the backs of camels, someone asked him, "How are you O the descendant of the Prophet?" He said, "Our condition is like that of Prophet Musa, peace be upon him, in the hands of Pharaoh who killed all the males and let the females live, so that we cannot tell the day from the night." What he meant was that they were the people called *ahli-bala* (bearer of hardships) who were obliged to God for fortunes and exercised patience in adversities.

It is said that once the Ummayyad emperor, Hisham bin Abdul Malik arrived in Makkah for *hajj*. While going round the Ka'bah (shrine) he wanted to perform the ceremony of kissing the Holy Stone, but was unable to reach it due to the great rush of the pilgrims. Then came Imam Zainal Abidin with his face shining like the moon, his cheeks glowing with light and his garments fragrant with perfume, and started going round the Ka'bah. When he moved towards the Holy Stone to kiss it, the whole crowd vanished to make room for him and he kissed the stone with perfect ease. One of his friends asked the

emperor, "Who is that person who commands so much respect among the people?" "I do not know," said he out of jealousy, although he knew who he was. This provoked the anger of the poet Marzuq who overheard the conversation. He came forward and said, "I know who that personage is, listen to what I say about him and his family." He then started pouring forth the following eulogy to the utter amazement of the crowd and the Emperor:

He's the man whose feet,
The lands of Arabia know well.
He's the man whose face
Makkah and Ka'bah aspire to see.
He's the man dearest to Zahra,
He's the man whose grandfather the Prophet is,
Whose face is the candle of night,
Like the sun which tears darkness,
His grandeur men could bear not,
His smile would give bliss to all,
His position none could reach,
His dignity none could covet,
Best among Prophets and all men,
Is his grandfather thou knoweth not?
Holy Stone which emperors miss,
His hand would Ka'bah covet to kiss.

This praise of the grandson of the Prophet (s.a.w.) infuriated Emperor Hisham who flung Marzuq in prison in Asfan midway between Makkah and Madinah. Imam Zainal Abidin felt sorry for him and sent him a gift of 12,000 dinars saying that he was sorry he could not afford to give more. But Marzuq returned the money saying, "I have amassed enough wealth by falsely eulogising kings and nobles, and sinned. What I have said in your praise is the result of the love which I bear for God and for the sons of the Prophet, so that the Almighty may be pleased, and forgive me." But the Imam sent the money back to him saying, "If you love us, do not force me to take back what I have once parted with." Marzuq accepted the gift.

Imam Ali Abu Ja'far Muhammad bin Ali bin Hussain al-Baqir

Hadhrat Imam Ali al-Baqir was the grandson of Imam Hussain ibn Ali, may Allah be pleased with them. He was one of the greatest men of *mushahidah* (unitive life) among the members of the Prophet's family. He was known as Abu Abdullah as well, and Baqir was his title. He is well known for his sayings on the mysteries of the Sufi path, and Divine Secrets. He was a man of astounding miracles, vivid sainthood and glorious traditions. Once the emperor felt angry with him, and wanted to kill him, and sent for him. When he entered his court, the emperor got up, received him with respect, apologised

for his inconvenience and sent him back with presents. When the courtiers asked him the reason for this unusual behaviour he said, "When he came close to me I saw two lions on his right and left threatening to kill me if I dared to touch him."

While explaining the inner meaning of the Qur'anic verse, "He who denies Taghut (Satan) and believes in God...." [2:257], he said, "The word *taghut* here means anything which veils you from God." Now it is for you to see what deflects you from the right path and becomes a veil between you and God, so that you do away with it and come face to face with Truth free from all kinds of veils.

One of his close friends has said that when a portion of the night had passed Imam Baqir would finish his recitations (*auraad*) and invoke God's mercy loudly in the following words:

> "My Lord God! Night has fallen; the reign of the Kings is over, the stars are up in the sky; all mankind has gone to sleep and disappeared; quiet prevails; the needy have stopped knocking at the doors of the rich. The Ummayyad rulers are resting, with watchmen guarding their gates; and those who wanted benefits from them have retired. But my Lord thou art the Eternal, the Living, the Knowing, far from sleeping and dozing. He who does not believe in these qualities is not worthy of receiving anything from Thee. There is nothing which can stop Thee from doing what Thou intendeth to do; the doors of Thy treasures are open at all times, and day or night do not make any difference. He who comes to Thy door never goes empty handed. Thou art the Lord who drives none away from Thy court, nor can any one else in the world stop him from knocking at Thy door. How can I rest when I remember death, grave and accountability (*hisab*) on the day of Judgement? Therefore, I beg everything of Thee as there is none else to give; I beseech Thee to allow me rest in the grave free from torture (*azab*), and I implore Thee to forgive me on the Day of Judgement."

The whole night he would pray like this and weep. I said to him one night, "Sire! Why do you weep and cry like this?" His reply was, "Prophet Ya'qub lost just one son and wept till he went blind. How can I help weeping when I have lost eighteen members of my family, including my grandfather Hussain at Karbala. Have I suffered in any way less than Prophet Ya'qub which caused his blindness?" This prayer in the original Arabic is long and touching. I have rendered it short and easy into Persian for the sake of brevity.

Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq

Imam Abu Muhammad Ja'far bin Muhammad as-Sadiq bin Ali bin Hussain, may Allah be pleased with them, was the beauty of Islam and the pride of *tariqat* (Sufi path). He was a Spokesman of Gnosis (*ma'rifat*) and an Ornament of Sainthood, held in an extremely

exalted position in *walayat* (friendship of God) and lived a highly pious life rich in inner and outer beauty. He is famous for his subtle sayings on *tariqat* and profound truths on *haqiqat* and is one of the greatest Shaikhs of Islam. He is the author of several books on the Sufi path. He is reported to have said, "*Man arafa Allah araz an masawa.*" (He who knows God turns his back on everything other than God.) *Arif* (gnostic) is he who cuts himself away from the world. Affirmation of God is the negation of all else, since *ma'rifat* (gnosis) leads you to forget everything other than God, but attachment to other than God leads you to forget God.

The *arif* (gnostic) is therefore he who is detached from everything other than God, and is attached to God alone with no other attraction of other than God left in his heart. He has also said, "No worship is worship without repentance (*taubah*)," for Allah has given preference to repentance in the verse, "*At-taibun al-abideen*" (Those who repent and worship [9:112]). This is because repentance is the beginning and *abdiyat* (servanthood) is the goal of the Sufi path.

Another proof of the superiority of *abdiyat* over *taubah* (repentance) is that when God Almighty referred to the sinners he called upon them to repent in the verse "Repent unto God." [24:31]. But when he referred to the Prophet, peace be upon him, He used the word *abd* in the verse "He revealed to His *abd* what He revealed," [53:10] during the night of Ascension (*Mi'raj*).

It is said that once Daud Tai, may Allah be pleased with him, came to see Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq and said, " O the son of the Prophet, benefit me with your best advice as my heart has darkened." He said, "O Abu Sulaiman, Thou art the saint of the age, how can I advise you." Daud Tai said, "Thou art the son of the Prophet and superior to all human beings. If thou art not competent to advise who else is?" The Imam's reply was, "O Abu Sulaiman, I am afraid of the time when the Prophet would call upon me on the Day of Judgement, to explain why I followed him not in the manner I should have done. So you see it is not sonship, but deeds which count in the eye of God Almighty." Hearing this Daud started weeping and said "My Lord when this is the condition of the man who is made from the clay of prophethood, whose very nature is truth, whose father is the Prophet, whose mother is Batul (the daughter of the Prophet), who is poor Daud to be proud of his deeds."

It is also related of Imam Ja'far As-Sadiq that one day he was sitting with his servants and said, "Come let us enter into a covenant that whosoever is emancipated on the Day of Judgement will intercede for the rest of us." The slaves said, "O the son of the Prophet, how can we intercede for you when your father is the intercessor of all mankind." His reply was "I am ashamed of myself so much that I cannot look to my grandfather to help me." This degree of humility is the result of nothing but self-abasement and speaks of excellence of his spiritual elevation. And all the Friends of God, the prophets and saints (*auliya*) have been like this. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said "When Allah wishes a man well, He enables him to detect his own fault." So he who bows his head down in submission

and humility is favoured by God Almighty who favours with success both in this world and the hereafter.

If I do full justice in mentioning the merits of the members of the Prophet's family, this book would swell to unproportionate dimensions. I consider this enough for those who possess wisdom. Now I will describe the stories of the *Ashab-us-Suffah* (Companions of the Verandah) briefly. I have already written a comprehensive book on the subject called *Minhajuddin*. Here I will content myself to mentioning their names and nicknames only.

CHAPTER NINE

Companions of the Verandah *(Suffah)*

It may be mentioned that a section of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) had renounced the world and were fully devoted to the worship of God in the Mosque of the Prophet (s.a.w.). It is these people who are referred to in the verse:

"Do not avoid those who remember their Lord day and night and aspire for (the vision of) His face." [6:52]

In this verse the Almighty reproached the Prophet, may peace be upon him.

Commentary: A Christian commentator has said with regard to this reproach that "had Muhammad been an imposter he would have been the last man to make known this verse."

The Holy Qur'an and the Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) are full of appreciation of these people, of which a few instances are narrated here. Ibn Abbas has reported that once the Prophet (s.a.w.), stayed with them and seeing their asceticism, devotion and fortitude said, "Congratulations! O people of the Verandah, he who in my *ummah* maintains this discipline and is contented with it, will be one of my companions in paradise." This promise holds good in the case of all such members of the Prophet's *ummah* who are gifted with these qualities for all time to come.

The following are some of the companions of the verandah: Hadhrat Bilal bin Rabah, Abu Abdullah Salman Farsi, Abu Ubaydullah bin Amir, Ammar bin Yasir, Abu Mas'ud

Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Utbah bin Mas'ud, brother of Abdullah bin Mas'ud, Miqdad bin Aswad, Khabbab bin Arth, Suhayb bin Sanan, Utbah bin Ghuzwan, Zayd bin Khattab, brother of Hadhrat Umar bin Khattab, Abu Kubaisha, the slave of the Prophet, peace be upon him, Abul Murthid Kanana bin Hussain Adawi, Salim, the slave of the Huzaifa Yamani, Akasha bin Hasin, Mas'ud bin Rabia Qari, Abu Dharr Jand Ghaffari, Abdullah bin Umar, Abu Darda bin Amir, Abu Safwan bin Baiza, Abu Albaba bin Mundir, Abdullah bin Badr Juhni, may Allah be please with them.

There are a few more Companions of the Verandah (*Ashab-ul-Suffah*) who occasionally lived in that community. They are Hadhrat Abu Hurairah, Thauban, Muadh bin Harith, Saib bin Khalid, Thabit bin Wadiat, Abu Isa Awam bin Saida, Salim bin Umair bin Thabit, Abu Yasar Kaab bin Amr, Wahb bin Muaqil, Abdullah bin Anas, Hajjaj bin Umar Aslami, may Allah be pleased with them.

In fact, the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him, are the best of mankind because the Almighty had bestowed upon them the distinction of having lived with the Prophet, (s.a.w.), and had saved them from going astray. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "My companions are the best of mankind, then those who come after them, then those who come after them." Allah Almighty has also said, "The best are those who were the first to accept Islam out of the Muhajirin (Refugees) and Ansar (Madinites), and those who followed them in sincerity."

CHAPTER TEN

Followers of the Companions *(Tabi'in)*

Uwais Qarni

Hadhrat Uwais Qarni, the Sun of the *ummah* and Candle of Islam, is one of the greatest Sufi shaikhs among the followers of the companions of the Prophet, peace be upon him. But he could not see the Prophet (s.a.w.), partly because he was overwhelmed by *hal* (ecstatic rapture), and partly because of full devotion to his mother's service. The Prophet, peace be upon him, told his companions that there was a man in Qarn by the name of Uwais, "who will intercede for as many men of my *ummah* on the Day of Judgement, as there are goats in the Rabia and Mudhir tribes," (who were famous for huge flocks of goats). He also bade Hadhrat Umar and Ali, may Allah be pleased with them, to go and see Uwais who had the following signs: medium height, long hair and a white spot the size of a dirham on his left side, not caused by leprosy, and a white spot on his palm. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "When you meet him, convey my *salaams* to him and ask him to pray for my *ummah*." After the Prophet (s.a.w.) had passed away, Hadhrat Umar and Ali happened to be in Makkah. During his congregational address Hadhrat Umar turned to the people from Najd and asked, "Is there any man from Qarn among you?" When they replied in the affirmative, he enquired if there lived a person of the name of Uwais there. They said, "Yes he is crazy, lives alone and does not mix with people. He does not eat what people generally eat, and is not affected by happiness or sorrow. When people laugh he weeps, and when they weep he laughs." Hadhrat Umar said, "I want to meet him." They took Hadhrat Umar and Ali to the place where he lived, and found him saying his prayers (*salat*). When he finished his prayer, he wished them *salaam* and showed them the marks of recognition which the Prophet (s.a.w.) had indicated. Hadhrat Umar and Ali delivered the Prophet's message to him and asked for *doa'* (prayer) for the *ummah*.

They remained there for some time. Uwais said, "I am sorry you had to travel all the way to see me. You should better go back now, for the Day of Dooms is near and we will meet again there without fear of parting; for now I am busy in preparing for that day."

After Hadhrat Umar and Ali, may Allah be pleased with them, had left, Uwais's honour and esteem went up among his people; as a result of which he fled to Kufah and was no more seen by anybody except Harm bin Hayan and that only once. He reappeared during the battle of Siffin (between Hadhrat Ali and Hadhrat Muawiyah, may Allah be pleased with them). He fought on the side of Hadhrat Ali and fell a martyr. He lived as a *hameed* (virtuous) and died a *shaheed* (martyr). He is reported to have said, "Safety lies in solitude". For the heart which is alone is attached with God and detached from all else. But do not go away with the idea that solitude means living alone. Since even in solitude, Satan is your companion and your *nafs* (lower self) is your overlord. So long as worldly thoughts go on haunting your heart, solitude is no solitude. It is equally bad if you are troubled by the pleasures of the world or the thought thereof. It is equally possible to live among the people and have the benefit of solitude, and to live in solitude and remain disturbed. Real solitude lies in the love of God. He who loves God, is not disturbed by anything. But he who loves the world, has nothing to do with God. Real solitude (*wahdat*) is characteristic of the pious soul (*abd saf*) who finds peace in the verse "*Alaisa Allah-u-Kaffin abdahu*" (Is God not enough for the *abd* [true slave]?)[39:36].

Commentary: Real *abd* in Sufism is he who has gone through the spiritual course, achieved the status of *fana* and *baqa* and descended from oneness of *fana* to complicity of *baqa-bi-Allah*.

Harm bin Hayan

Hadhrat Harm bin Hayan is another follower of the companions (*tabi'i*). He is known for piety and asceticism characteristic of Sufism (*tariqat*), and was well versed in the affairs of the path. He went to Qarn to meet Uwais Qarni, but he could not as Uwais was not there.

On returning to Makkah he was told that Uwais was at Kufah. He went to Kufah but again could not see him because he had left for an unknown destination. After staying at Kufah for a long time, he became disappointed and went to Basrah and found Uwais sitting on the bank of the river Euphrates clad in *muraqqah*. When Harm bin Hayan greeted him with the usual Muslim *salaam*, Uwais replied, "And *salaam* be upon you also O Harm bin Hayan." Harm said, "How did you know that I was Harm?" He said, "My soul has recognised your soul." After a brief conversation which related to the visit of Hadhrat Umar and Hadhrat Ali, Uwais told him to go. He said to Harm that Umar had related the following Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) to him. "Deeds (*amal*) are governed

by intentions (*niyyat*). Man gets what he really intended to get. For instance, if in migrating to Madinah his intention is the goodwill of God and His Prophet (s.a.w.), he will get the goodwill of God and the Prophet (s.a.w). But if his real intention (at the back of his mind) is worldly gains or a wife, he will get that."

Harm said Uwais Qarni also advised me to guard my heart (*qalb*). This has two meanings. One is that the seeker should bend his heart to God's devotion through *mujahidah* (hard struggle). The other is that the seeker should bend himself to obey his heart. In the former case, the seeker has to abstain from animal desires, and take to desirable practices in accordance with the commands of God.

So far as bending to obey his heart is concerned it is the *kamilin* (perfect) who can do it. That is to say, when God Almighty has illuminated their souls with the light of His beauty (*jamal*), and saved them from the limitations of cause and effect, and has bestowed upon them the robe of honour and Divine nearness (*qurb*) to be able to behold His Beauty and enjoy the state of unity with Him, the seeker is then called upon to bend himself to the obedience of his heart.

The seeker is then known as *sahib-ul-qalb* (master of the heart) like the earlier Sufis. A master of the heart is known as *baqi-us-siffat* (or *baqi-bi-Allah*), and a slave of the heart as *fani-us-siffat* (or *fani-fi-Allah*). This is what is meant by the verse, "Thy slave who has been characterised by *ikhlas* (sincerity)." [15:40]. There are two versions of the word *mukhlasin* in this verse: *mukhlasin* and *mukhlisin*. He who is overpowered by his heart and is *fani-us-siffat* and is called *mukhlasin;* and *mukhlisin* is he who overpowers his heart and belongs to the category of those who are masters over their hearts and are called *baqi-us-siffat* (*baqi-bi-Allah*). This is going to be explained further in its proper place.

In fact, the Sufis of the later group i.e., those who bend their bodies to obey their hearts and whose hearts (souls) are united with God rank higher than those of the former category known as *fani-us-siffat*. The difference between the two concepts is the difference between sobriety (*sahw*) and intoxication (*sukr*), or *mushahadah* (vision) and *mujahidah* (struggle). Allah knows better.

Commentary: The state of *fana* is characterised by intoxication (*sukr*) and of *baqa* by sobriety (*sahw*). The former is also called the state of *mujahidah* and the latter as *mushahidah*.

Khawaja Hasan Basri

Hadhrat Khawaja Abu Ali Hasan Basri was the *Imam* (master) of his time. He is also known as Abu Said Hasan-al-Basri in some quarters. He is held in great honour and

esteem among the Sufis. He is known for subtle truths on the subject of gnosis. Once a villager asked him, "What is patience (*sabr*)?" He said, "Patience is of two kinds. Patience at the time of trouble and misfortune, and also patience in resisting the temptation of what God has declared unlawful and forbidden." The villager said, "I have never seen a man with greater piety (*zuhd*) than you and a man with patience better than you." Hasan said, "My piety is all greed and my patience is all fear." The villager said, "Please elucidate your remarks as my faith has started shaking." Hasan said, "My patience at the time of trouble or in obedience to God is for fear of hell fire which is not real and my piety is due to greed for paradise which is not genuine. A sincere person is he whose patience and piety are for God and not for the fear of hell or for the prize of paradise." He is also reported to have said, "*Suhbat-ul-ashrari turitho su' azanni bil akhyar.*" (The company of the wicked breeds suspicion and antagonism against the pious.) This statement applies specifically to the present age when the people have turned against genuine saints because when they mix with the charlatans (fake Sufis) and find them steeped in hypocrisy, falsehood, absurdities, greed and lust they think all the Sufis are like this, not knowing that the real Sufis are true lovers of God, devoted to His worship day and night, and are far from hypocrisy, falsehood and lust. Their speech is for God, their hearing is for God, their love is for God, their actions are for God and their efforts are concentrated to achieve God's nearness and God's vision. So if anybody chooses the company of the wicked it is his own fault. He should blame none but himself for associating with the hypocrites who are worst of mankind, and he who chooses the company of the worst of men, must of necessity hate those who are genuine Friends of God. On the other hand, those who choose the company of the genuine shaikhs and adopt their ways, reach their destination.

Saeed bin Mussayyib

Hadhrat Saeed bin Mussayyib is the head of the *ulama* and elite of the elite. He was a man of an exalted status and a high position in spiritualism, loved and honoured by the people of his age. He is known for his high achievements in almost all the branches of Islamic learning such as *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *tauhid* (unity), *haqaiq* (secrets), *tafsir* (exegesis), *shair* (poetry) and *naat* (eulogy of the Prophet) etc. It is said that he was a believer in the cult of self-abasement (*malamat*) which stands recognised in Sufism, and has been the way of many *mashaikhs*. He is reported to have said, "Be contented with a little of this world (*dunya*) to save your faith (*din*) unlike those who went in for more and destroyed their faith." That is to say, poverty with safety of faith is better than riches accompanied by loss of faith. The *faqir* (dervish) has his hands empty and heart full of God, while the rich has his heart empty and hands full of gold.

So, the contentment of the Friends of God without negligence is better than the contentment of the negligent with wealth without God. Similarly, adversity and austerity with faith are more valuable than plenty and prosperity without faith. When misfortunes come, the negligent say, "Thank God we are safe," and the Friends of God say, "Thank

God our faith is safe." This is because when the heart has *baqa* (in God) the body welcomes *bala* (affliction). But when the heart is full of negligence (*ghaflat*), abundance of wealth turns into affliction. The truth is that contentment with a little is real wealth, and lust for more is poverty.

Commentary: So the contentment of His friends with their Master is superior to the contentment of the negligent with wealth or other than God.

Once when Hadhrat Saeed bin Mussayyib was in Makkah, a person came to him and said, "Let me know of that *halal* (lawful) which has no *haram* (unlawful) in it, and that *haram* which has no *halal* in it." He said, "Remembrance of God is the *halal* in which is no *haram*, and remembrance of anything other than God is the *haram* in which there is no *halal*." For, your emancipation lies in former and your destruction in the latter. And the power to act lies with God alone.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Companions of the Followers of the Companions

Habib Ajami

Hadhrat Habib Ajami ('the non-Arab') who is famous for upholding both *shariat* and *tariqat* (Sufism), ranks as one of the greatest Sufi shaikhs of his time. He repented at the hands of Hadhrat Hasan Basri. Before repentance he was a man given to usury and all sorts of extravagances. However, God Almighty enabled him to give up sin and take to piety. He received spiritual training at the hands of Hasan Basri. Once Habib was leading a prayer (*salat*) when Hasan arrived. Hasan refrained from praying under his leadership (*imamat*), since being a Persian, Habib's pronunciation of the Arabic (Qur'anic verses) was imperfect. The same night Hasan saw the Almighty in a dream and said, "My Lord, where can I find your good will (*ridha*)?" God said, "You came close to my good will, but did not accept it." "How is that my Lord?" cried Hasan. God said, "If you had joined in prayer behind Habib last night, you would have found what you wanted."

It is said that when Hasan Basri fled from the tyrant Hujjaj bin Yusuf and took refuge in Habib's hut, government officials came to arrest him. When they asked Habib of Hasan's whereabouts, Habib said, "He is in this hut." They hastened to catch him, but found nobody in it. They thought Habib was joking, and therefore took him to task. Habib said, "I am not lying. He is in this hut." They searched the hut twice and thrice but found no one there, and so they went away. Hasan came out and said, "I am sure, it is because of your goodness (*barakah*) that they could not see me. Why did you say that I was in the hut?" Habib said, "Sire, it is not because of my goodness but because of the blessings of speaking the truth that you have been saved. Had I told a lie, they would have arrested both of us and disgraced us." Hadhrat Habib had many *karamat* (supernatural deeds) to his credit like this.

Once he was asked, "Wherein lies the good will of God?" He said, *"Fi qalbin laisa fibi nafaq"* (It is in the heart which is free from hypocrisy.) This is because *nifaq* (hypocrisy) is inconsistent with *wifaq* (unity). Love is incompatible with hypocrisy but is compatible with good will (*ridha*), which is one of the characteristics of the Friends of God. On the other hand, hypocrisy is the sign of the enemies of God. This is an important subject by itself which is going to be elaborated in its proper place.

Malik bin Dinar

Hadhrat Malik bin Dinar, the herald of love among men and jins, is one of the disciples of Hadhrat Hasan Basri and ranks as one of the greatest shaikhs of the path. He is known for his *karamat* (miracles) and *riyazat* (struggle for truth). His father Dinar was a slave when Malik was born. The following is the story of his repentance (*taubah*). One night he was in the middle of a singing session, when all of a sudden the musical instruments sounded the call, "O Malik, O Malik why do you not repent?" He rose and went straight to Hasan and repented. He went through the regular course of spiritual training and reached a high status.

Once he was travelling in a boat, when somebody's jewel was stolen. As he was poorly dressed everybody suspected him, and demanded the jewel from him. He looked up to the heavens and all of a sudden many fish came out with *dinars* in their mouths. He took a *dinar*, and giving it to the owner, walked over the surface of the water and disappeared. He is reported to have said, *"Ahabbal aamali allaya-al-ikhlas fi aamal"* (The thing I love most is sincerity in deeds). This is because a deed is valued only when there is sincerity behind it. Sincerity (*ikhlas*) in deeds is like the soul in a body. A body without soul is dead like a stone. Sincerity is the inner aspect and deeds the outer. It is only when the inner and outer are coalesced that perfection is assured. Both are complementary or interdependent. If a man cherishes sincerity for a thousand years but does not exhibit it by deeds, he has gone nowhere. Again if he does deeds without sincerity for a thousand years, he has gone nowhere. Deeds count as deeds only when they are founded on sincerity.

Abu Halim Habib bin Aslam al-Rayi

He is one of the greatest saints of Islam and a man of high merits in spirituality. He is one of the disciples of Hadhrat Salman Farsi. He related the following saying of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), *"Niyyat-al-Mu'mini Khairun min amalihi"* (A believer's intention to do good deed is better than the deed itself). He had some goats which he used to leave on the bank of the river Euphrates to graze while he was devoting himself to worship. One of the mashaikhs related the following story:

"Once I saw Habib was busy in prayer, while a wolf was looking after his goats. I thought that I should go and visit him. When he finished his prayer, I greeted him with *salaam*.

He said, "My son is there anything which I can do for you?" I said, "I came only to see you." He said, "May Allah bless you." I said, "O shaikh, I see the wolf is at peace with your goats." He said, "Yes, because the owner of the goats is at peace with God." Saying this he placed a wooden cup under a rock out of which two springs of milk and honey began to flow. When he bade me to take it, I said, "O shaikh how did you achieve this miracle? He said, "Through obedience to Prophet Muhammad, (s.a.w.). Do you not remember my son, that the Prophet Musa (a.s.), gave his people water out of stone though they were against him. Since Muhammad, peace be upon him, has a higher status than Musa, peace be upon him, my obedience to him gave me honey and milk out of stone." I then requested him to give me a piece of advice. He said, "*La Tajaal qalbaka sanduqal hirsi wa batanaka vida al-haram*" (Do not turn your heart into a storehouse of greed and your stomach an oven of filth). In following this advice is the safety, and in neglecting it is the destruction of mankind."

My shaikh, may Allah be pleased with him, had told me more about Habib Rayi but my books are in Ghazni and I am in Lahore in the vicinity of Multan, in the company of crude persons. I am grateful to Allah both in happiness and sorrow.

Abu Hazim al-Madni

He was one of the leading shaikhs of his time. He enjoyed a high position in Sufism, and was an *ascetic* par excellence. Umar bin Uthman al-Makki was his disciple. His sayings are extremely beautiful and are found in many books. It is reported by Umar bin Uthman that once he was asked, "*Ma malak?*" (What is your property?). He said, "*Ar-Razao anil Allah wal ghinao anil khalq.*" (Pleasure of God and non-dependence upon others).

It is quite natural that he who is satisfied with God, need not depend on others. God's pleasure is the greatest treasure for him, that is to say he is rich with God, the most exalted. He who is rich with God is independent of all. He is fully devoted to God and wants nothing but God in private and public.

One of the shaikhs said, "I went to see Abu Hashim and found him sleeping. When he got up, he said, 'I have a message from the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) for you. The Prophet wanted me in the dream to tell you to give up the idea of going for *hajj* (pilgrimage) for service to your mother is better than performing *hajj*. Go back and please her heart.' So I did not go to Makkah and came back home."

Muhammad bin Wasia

He was a man of *mujahidah* (struggle) and was well established in *mushahidah* (unitive life). He was the greatest shaikh of his time, and had had the benefit of the company of a good number of *Tabi'in* (Companions of the Companions). He had met many

mashaikhs and learnt a good deal of *tariqat* (Sufism) from them. He is famous for subtle sayings with regard to the mysteries of spiritualism. He said, "*Ma ra-aito shaiyan illa wa raaito Allah fihi*" (I do not see anything without seeing Allah in it.) This is known as the state of *mushahidah* (vision or unitive life) in which the seeker is overwhelmed by the love of the creator so much so that he sees nothing in creation except the Creator. This is like the saying of Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) who looked at the sun and stars and said, "This is my Lord." [6:76-78]. This is because, in the state of overwhelming love for God, he could only behold the Creator in the creation. When the lovers of God look at the universe, they find it completely overpowered by the force (*qahr*) of Divine power and subjugated by His Majesty and therefore they see the Creator instead of the creation, for the creation disappears in their eyes and only the Creator predominates. This will be elaborated in the chapter on *mushahidah*.

There is however a section of people who think that Muhammad bin Wasia's statement, "I see God in everything" amounts to *halul* (reincarnation), which is heresy, because the container and the contained should be homogeneous; but the Creator and the creation are not homogeneous. If the container (creation) is created (*muhdith*), the contained (God) must also be *muhdith*. If, on the other hand, you think the contained (God) is eternal (*Qadim*), the container (universe) must also be eternal. Both of the propositions are wrong and heretical. The true position is what I have said before. There are some more secrets in this regard which I am going to explain at the proper place.

Commentary: The true position is this. When it is said God is seen in the universe, it does not mean He is like water in the jug. What it means is that water is in the ice ball or it has appeared in the shape of ice. So there is no question of heterogeneity. Yet another example is, "Poem is not separate from the poet."

Imam Abu Hanifah

Imam Abu Hanifah Nu'man bin Thabit al-Kharraz, may Allah he pleased with him, had a firm footing in *shariat* and a high status in *tariqat*. To begin with, he loved solitude and wanted to renounce the world and live a life of seclusion so as to keep away from the contamination of power and position, and be fully devoted to God Almighty. However, he gave up that idea when he had a dream in which he saw himself sorting out the bones of the Prophet (s.a.w.) in his grave, and was giving preference to some of them over the others.

He went to one of the disciples of Muhammad bin Sirrin (who was well-versed in interpreting dreams) and asked the meaning of that dream. He said, "You will reach a position in the knowledge of Hadith when you will be able to judge Hadith properly and distinguish the correct sayings from the fake ones."

In another dream the Prophet (s.a.w.), said to him, "O Abu Hanifah, you have been created to revive my *Sunnah*. Do not take to solitude." Imam Abu Hanifah was the teacher of some of the great *mashaikhs* like Ibrahim bin Adham, Fudhail bin Ayadh, Daud Tai, Bishr Hafi, etc.

It is related in the chronicles that once Emperor Mansur planned to select a *qadhi* (chief justice) out of the following four persons, Imam Abu Hanifah, Sufyan Thauri, Mu'sar Sallah bin Ashim and Qadhi Sharih, all of whom were great scholars in Islamic learning. Consequently, they were summoned to the court. While going to the emperor, Imam Abu Hanifah told his companions that he had a plan for each of them. They said "What is that?" He said, "I will try to get rid of the offer on some pretext; Mu'sar should pretend madness; Sufyan should flee; and Sharih should accept the offer. Accordingly Sufyan escaped by crossing the river using a boat and disappeared. The remaining three persons were brought before the emperor.

First he addressed Imam Abu Hanifah and told him that he wanted to appoint him as the *qadhi* of the empire. The Imam said, "O Amir al-Mu'minin as I am a non-Arab, and a slave too, the Arab chiefs will not be inclined to accept my decision." The emperor said, "It is not race, but knowledge and competence which counts in this matter." Abu Hanifah said, "But I am not competent for the job." The emperor said, "I know you are competent." Abu Hanifah replied, "It means I am telling a lie, in which case too I am not fit for the post, because a liar cannot be fit to be a *qadhi*. So, in both cases I am not fit for the job. You are a caliph of God. You should not appoint a liar to such a high post." In this way he succeeded in getting rid of the job. Now came the turn of Mu'sar. He took the hand of the Caliph and said "How are you? And how are your children? How are your animals?" Seeing this the Caliph exclaimed, "He is mad, take him away." Then he asked Sharih to accept the job. He said "I am also mentally imbalanced and short of memory." The Caliph said, "Never mind, you will be alright by treatment." Thus, he was appointed as the *qadhi* of the Empire.

Commentary: This shows how the genuine and really competent people tried to avoid high positions to save their faith.

This was how Imam Abu Hanifah succeeded in avoiding the post. Henceforward he never met Sharih and kept himself away from him. This story bears testimony to his greatness from two points of view. Firstly, his wisdom to understand what he and his companions had to do and secondly, his contentment and love for solitude in which he found safety of faith. Incidentally, the cult of self reproach (*malamat*) also stands proven by the behaviour of these scholars who had to make a show of weaknesses and feign imperfection on their part to avoid worldly honour and dignity, which they feared would harm them spiritually, while the pretenders do just the opposite. Being slaves of greed they worship the rich and powerful, lick their shoes, take their palaces as *qiblat* and their thresholds as *Qaba Qausain*.

Once a pretender in Ghazni who feigned to profess *malamat*, said that the wearing of the *muraqqah* was *bid'at* (heretical). I said to him, "You feel no hesitation in wearing the robes of silk which are definitely *haram* (forbidden) in Islam and that too you beg from the tyrannical and wicked people who amass wealth through unlawful means. Had you not been overpowered by arrogance and vice, you would not have said this. Silk dresses are lawful for females but not for males. It is certainly unbecoming on your part to wear silk and condemn the patched garment obtained by lawful means."

Imam Abu Hanifah says, "When Noufil bin Hayan died, I saw in a dream in which mankind was busy submitting accounts on the Day of Judgment. I saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) standing at the edge of a pool of water with many mashaikhs on his right and left. There was a handsome old man with grey hair standing nearest to the Prophet (s.a.w.) with his bright face almost touching the Prophet's face. Noufil bin Hayan was also there. When he saw me he came close to me and greeted me with *salaam*. I asked him to give me some water. He said that he would ask the Prophet's permission first. As soon as he said this, the Prophet, (s.a.w) raised his finger as a token of approval and he gave us a vessel full of water which the companions and I drank to our fill. However, the vessel remained as full as before. I asked Noufil who was that venerable personage on the Prophet's right. He said it was Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) and on his left was Hadhrat Abu Bakr As-Siddiq (r.a.). He went on introducing the *mashaikhs* to me and I went on counting them on my fingers, the last number being seventeen. When I woke up I still had my finger on number seventeen."

Yahya bin Muadh Razi said, "I saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in a dream and said to him, 'Where can I find you.' He said, 'In the knowledge of Abu Hanifah.' " Imam Abu Hanifah's merits and virtues are too many to be described in this small book.

Once when I, Ali bin Uthman was staying at the tomb of Hadhrat Bilal (companion of the Prophet (s.a.w.)) in Damascus, I saw in a dream that I was in Makkah. I saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), entering the Shrine of Ka'bah through the Gate of Bani Shiba carrying an old man as one carries a child on one's bosom. I ardently ran to the Prophet and kissed his feet. I was wondering who the old man was. Reading my mind the Prophet said "He is your Imam and the Imam of your country, Abu Hanifah." My countrymen and I are indeed lucky to have that honour. This dream is enough to confirm that Imam Abu Hanifah was *fani-us-siffat* by himself and *baqi-us-siffat* with the Prophet (s.a.w.) by virtue of the fact that the Prophet (s.a.w.) lifted him to his bosom. Had he been walking on his own feet he would not have been *fani* by himself, instead he would have been *baqi* with himself. Know that what is verified by the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself cannot be questioned.

Commentary: To be *fani* by himself and *baqi* by the Prophet is getting the status of becoming one with Prophet (s.a.w.) as the seeker becomes one with God in the state of *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah* as explained several times before. These

states are then called *fana-fi-rasul* and *baqa-bi rasul* respectively. The state of *fana-fi-rasul* is preceded by the state of *fana-fi-shaikh* that is to say *fana* in one's own spiritual guide.

It is said that when Daud Tai had learned all the Islamic sciences and became a great scholar he went to Imam Abu Hanifah and said, "What should I do next?" The Imam replied, "*Alaik bil amal fa innal ilma bila amal kal jasdu bila rab*" (Bring your knowledge (*ilm*) into practice, since knowledge without practice is like a body without soul). If knowledge is not followed by practice it is meaningless. He who is contented with knowledge alone is not an *alim* (man of knowledge) in the real sense of the word. It is like true guidance which is not possible without struggle (devotion), or like *mushahadah* (unity with God) which is not possible without *mujahidah* (devotion). Therefore, knowledge is a necessary complement of action and no knowledge is complete without action. It is like the light of the sun which cannot be separated from the sun. I have already explained the benefits of knowledge earlier.

Abdullah bin Mubarak al-Mazuri

The head of *zuhhad* (ascetics), master of *autad* (pillars), Hadhrat Abdullah bin Mubarak al-Mazuri (r.a.) is one of the great saints of Islam. Well versed in the theory and practice of *shariat* and *tariqat* (Sufism), he was the Imam (greatest guide) of his time and had the benefit of the company of many senior shaikhs. He is an author of several books on various sciences (*ulam*), and is famous for his *karamat* (miracles). The story of his *taubah* (repentance or conversion) is that he fell in love with a girl and one night he got a chance of seeing her on the roof of her house. He stood the whole night by the wall talking to her till he heard the *azan* (prayer call) for the morning prayer. He thought it was the call for the night prayer (*isha'*) until he saw broad daylight and realised his mistake. He cursed himself saying, "Shame to you O the son of Mubarak. You have wasted the whole night standing before the girl, whereas you would have roared at the *imam* (leader of prayer) had he recited a long passage in the prayer standing before God." He went home, repented and busied himself in learning Islamic sciences, and practising Sufism till he reached a high status in spiritualism, so much so that once his mother went into a garden and saw him sleeping with a big snake holding a branch of flowers in its mouth and driving the flies away.

After some time he left Merv for Baghdad and benefited from the company of several *mashaikhs*. From there he went to Makkah, stayed there for some time and returned to Merv once again where the people flocked round him and requested him to preside over an educational centre and a preaching association. At that time the people of Merv were divided into two sects. One belonged to Hadith and the other to Logic. He was so popular that he commanded respect from both the warring sects, so much so that each

sect claimed him to be its leader. He established two schools there, one for the people of Hadith and the other for the people of Logic, which are still functioning. After that he went to Hijaz and devoted himself to God in the Holy Shrine at Makkah.

When he was asked the wonders he had seen in his life, he said, "Once I saw a Christian monk (*rahib*) who had been reduced to a mere skeleton due to *mujahidah* and fear of God. I asked him, 'What is the way to God O *rahib*.' He replied, 'He who knows God, knows the way to Him also. I do not know Him but I worship Him. You know Him but you still disobey Him. The knowledge of God breeds fear, but you are fearless; and heresy creates heedlessness (*jahl*) but I am fearful.'" Abu Mubarak says, "This advice of his saved me from many things."

He is reported to have said, "*As-Sakun haramunala qulubil Awlia*" (Complacence is forbidden for the hearts of the Friends of God). For the friends are never at rest. They are restless in this world due to *talab* (separation) from God, and are bewildered in the hereafter due to *tarab* (the ecstasy) of Divine presence, and the brilliance of His Beauty. So, both this world and the next are similar for them. Peace of mind springs either from the achievement of the objectives or in being oblivious of it. So far as achievement of the objective i.e., perfect union with God is concerned, it is not obtainable both in this world and in the next. As regards being negligent of the object, it is *haram* (forbidden) for the friends. The result is that the lovers of God are always restless.

Commentary: What is meant by the sentence: "Peace of mind springs either from...." is that when you gain the object of your desire you feel satisfied, and when you are negligent i.e. careless about the object, you have no worry. Now, the question is why does the author say that the Friends of God do not achieve their object (God) although they are known to be in the state of *fana-fi-Allah* (union with God)? The answer as has already been stated earlier, is that since God's Being is limitless, the lovers go on struggling endlessly for an ever closer presence of the Divine Beloved throughout their lives but fail to complete the journey as there is no end. Their pangs of love therefore never end. The closer they come to Him, the greater is their desire, excitement and pangs. The other reason for peace of mind according to the author is negligence. This is because when a man is ignorant of God he is care free. But the Friends of God are not ignorant. They are never carefree.

Fudhail bin Ayadh

Hadhrat Abu Ali Fudhail ibn Ayadh, the head of the Friends of God and leader of the attendants of Divine Presence, ranks as one of the greatest *mashaikhs* of his time. He is famous for his subtle sayings regarding Divine mysteries and well known among all classes of people for his sincerity of purpose. In the beginning of his life he was a highway

robber operating between Merv and Maward. However, he was good natured and chivalrous at the same time. He never went anywhere near a female in the caravan which he plundered and would always spare those who did not have much and left enough with everyone he looted to complete their journey. Once a merchant left Merv for a certain destination. He was told to be careful because Fudhail was active on the route. He said, "I heard he is a good man." Accordingly, he took a *qari* (one who knows the Qur'an by heart) with him, gave him a camel to ride and asked him to go on reciting the Qur'an throughout the journey. When the caravan reached the place where Fudhail was in concealment, the *qari* was reciting the following verse: "Has the time not come for the believers to fear God, remember Him and pay heed to what is revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.)." [57:16]. As soon as Fudhail heard it, he was greatly touched and God's grace enabled him to repent and give up that sinful profession.

As he had noted down the names of all those he had looted, he returned all their money and valuables and went to Makkah where he remained devoted to God for a long time, and met several *auliya*. After that he went to Kufah and lived in the company of Imam Abu Hanifah (r.a.). He is a good traditionist i.e. specialist in the science of Hadith and famous for mystical truths in the Sufi doctrine and gnosis. He said, "He who knows God to the fullest extent of his knowledge, worships him to the best of his abilities." This is because he who knows God, knows Him through His gifts, bounties, mercy and kindness, and therefore loves Him. When he loves Him, worship becomes easy for him, and the more he loves God, the more he gets devoted to Him. It therefore follows that devotion springs from *ma'rifat* (knowledge, gnosis of God). The truth of this statement is illustrated by the story of the Prophet (s.a.w.) related by his wife Ayesha. She said, "One night the Prophet (s.a.w.) left his bed and disappeared. I went out to see where he was, and found him standing in the mosque praying (*salat*) and weeping. After some time Bilal came and sounded the call for the morning prayer. After having finished the morning prayer, the Prophet (s.a.w.) came back to his cottage with his feet swollen and a yellowish substance oozing out from the toes. Seeing this I wept and said, 'O Prophet of God, why do you torture yourself like this when all your sins have been forgiven by God?" The Prophet (s.a.w) said, 'O Ayesha, when the Almighty is so kind to me, should I not be grateful to Him.'"

Moreover, during the Night of Ascension the Prophet (s.a.w.) was fully satisfied with fifty prayers a day as decreed by God. It was at the suggestion of Prophet Musa (a.s.) that the Prophet (s.a.w) requested the Almighty to revise His decree and five prayers per day were ordained. The Prophet (s.a.w) had yielded to the decision of fifty prayers out of extreme love for God. For it is said, "*Al muhabba to Hiya al-muwafiqat*" (Love is obedience).

Hadhrat Fudhail is related to have said, "*Ad-dunya o dar ul mardha Wannaso fika majanin. Wa lil majanina alghal wal qaid*"; meaning, "The world is a madhouse containing mad men, and for the mad men are chains and shackles." Our greed is our chain and our sin is our shackle.

The *wazir* of Emperor Harun-al-Rashid, Fazal bin Rabi said, "I was with the Emperor at Makkah during *hajj*. After *hajj* was over the Emperor said, 'Is there any *wali-Allah* (Friend of God) here so that I may call on him?' I said, 'Yes, Abdul Razzaq Sanaani is here.' He said, 'Let us go and see him.' We went and remained with him for some time. In the end Harun-al-Rashid asked the shaikh if he had any debt to pay. He replied in the affirmative, and the Emperor gave him the required sum of money and we left. After that Harun asked me to take him to a greater shaikh. So we went to Sufyan bin Ainiya and sat with him for while. When the Emperor asked him if he had any debt to pay. He replied in the affirmative and the Emperor again gave him the money. On coming out, Harun said, 'I am not satisfied. Take me to a greater saint.' Then I, remembering that Fudhail bin Ayadh was also in Makkah, took the Emperor to him.

"Fudhail was sitting in a room reciting the Holy Qur'an. We knocked at the door. He said, 'Who is there?' I answered, '*The Amirul Mu'minin* (Emperor) has come to see you.' He replied, 'What have I to do with him.' Thereupon the Emperor said, 'Is it not the Hadith of the Prophet that self-basement (*zil*) is undesirable in the obedience of God?' Fudhail replied, 'Yes, but what you call abasement I call honour so long as it is conducive to the attainment of God's pleasure (*ridha*).' So he opened the door, but put out the candle in order not to see the Emperor's face as a matter of aversion and stood in a corner. Harun felt his way to the shaikh and touched his hand. The shaikh said, 'Ah! What a soft hand if only it could escape hell fire.' Hearing this Harun started weeping profusely and fainted.

"When he recovered he requested the shaikh to give him some advice. The shaikh said, 'O Commander of the Faithful, your ancestor Abbas, the Prophet's uncle once asked the Prophet (s.a.w.) to appoint him governor of some land. He replied, "O uncle, I have made thee governor of thyself for a moment," meaning thereby that a moment's worship of God is better than a thousand year's rule over people. For it is said, *"li anna amarata youm-al-qiyamat-al-nidamata"* (Rule even for one day is nothing but disappointment in the hereafter.)' Harun said, 'Please give some more advice.' The shaikh said, 'When Umar bin Abdul Aziz was selected as the *Amirul Mu'minin*, he sent for shaikhs like Salim bin Abdullah, Rija bin Hayat and Muhammad bin Kaab al-Qardhi and said, "I have fallen a victim to this tragedy (rulership). Is there any way out of this calamity which the people call a blessing?" One of them said, "If you want to escape God's punishment in the next world, treat the elders as you would your parents, the young ones as your brothers and the children as your sons. The Muslim world is like one family and the people are the members of that family. You should also respect your elders, be kind to the young ones and love the children."' After that the shaikh said, 'Fear God and do justice so that your handsome face is saved from hell fire.'

"Finally the Emperor said, 'Do you have a debt to someone.' He said, 'Yes, I owe a great debt to the Almighty in the form of worship and I shall suffer heavily in the hereafter if I do not pay it back.' Harun said, 'What I mean is whether you owe a debt to any man.' He said, 'I am grateful to the Lord who has bestowed everything in me and I do not need

anything.' Harun took out a bag of gold and placed it before him saying, 'Please spend it in any way you like.' The shaikh said, 'O *Amir ul Mu'minin* I think my advice has fallen on deaf ears. For you have started injustice and cruelty right now.' Harun said, 'What injustice have I done?' He said, 'I call you to salvation and you drag me into sin. Is there any injustice greater than that?' " This remark on his part touched both the Emperor and his *wazir* and they went out weeping. On coming out Harun said to his *wazir*, "Fudhail in reality is the Emperor."

All this shows how the shaikh had turned his back on the world and the people of the world and had no place in his heart left for wealth or anything connected with it. His merits are too many to be mentioned in this book.

Dhunnun bin Ibrahim al-Misri (the Egyptian)

Hadhrat Dhunnun bin Ibrahim Misri, who combines in himself the merits of *shariat* and *tariqat*, ranks as one of the greatest saints of Islam. His original name is Thauban. He is one of those who took to the cult of *malamat* and *bala* (self abnegation). That is why the people of Egypt failed to understand him, and remained unaware of his greatness till his death. It was on the night of his death that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), told seven persons in a dream that Dhunnun was the friend of God and that he (the Prophet) had come to receive him. When he died the following morning these words were seen written on his forehead, "*Hatha habib Allah mata fi hubb Allah qatil Allah*" (He is the lover of Allah who died for the love of Allah, and is a martyr). When his body was carried to the graveyard thousands of birds flocked around it and shadowed it from the sun. Seeing this the people of Egypt felt ashamed and regretted their cold attitude towards him during his life time.

He has left beautiful sayings in regard to the Sufi Path. He said, "*Al arifu kulla yaumun akhshaa, li annahu fi kulli sa'atun min-ar-rabi aqrab.*" That is to say, he who knows God is more fearful every day since he is closer to Him every moment and is aware of His Majesty (*Jalal*) more intimately. It is only then that he realises that he was far from God before, and, therefore, repents for it, and feels grieved. It is like the Prophet Musa (a.s.) who during one of his conversations with God said, "*Ya Rabb aina atlaboka, qala indal munkasirata qulubahum*" (Where can I find you my Lord! He said: in the broken hearts). Dhunnun said, "My Lord, there is no heart more broken than mine." God said "So I am where you are." This shows that he who pretends to have knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of God but is without fear is no *arif* (gnostic). *Ma'rifat* is based upon sincerity of purpose, and sincerity of purpose cuts across all connections of wealth and high birth, except the connection with the Almighty. Therefore, Dhunnun Misri, may Allah be pleased with him, said, "*Assidqo saifullahi fi arzihi ma wazaa ala shyin illa qatahu*" (Sincerity is the sword of God Almighty on earth which cuts everything it falls upon). And what is sincerity? It is attachment with the giver and not the gift. If it were the other way round, sincerity is not there.

It is related of Dhunnun that once he was travelling in a boat with his disciples when another boat appeared with people making merry and indulging in frivolities as is the habit of the Egyptians. This infuriated his disciples who urged the shaikh to pray for their annihilation so that the world would be rid of them. He got up and raised his hands in prayer saying, "My Lord, make these people as happy in the next world as You have made them in this world." His disciples were astonished to hear this, but as that boat drew near and its intimates looked at the shaikh they started weeping and asked him to forgive them. They broke their musical instruments, repented their follies and turned into good Muslims. The shaikh turned to his disciples and said, "Happiness in the next world is repentance in this world. You have seen that my prayer has been accepted. They have repented and have been saved from the affliction of the next world." This shows how kind he was to mankind and in this he followed the example of the Prophet (s.a.w) who was not perturbed by the cruelties of the infidels and prayed for their safety saying, "O God, guide my people on to the right path as they do not know."

The saint said, "Once I was returning from Jerusalem, when I saw a person at a distance. On coming closer I found that she was an old lady wearing a woollen cloak. I asked her, 'Where are you coming from?' She said, 'From God.' I said, 'Where are you going?' She said, 'To God.' I took out some coins from my pocket and offered them to her. She pulled her hand back and said, "O Dhunnun, your behaviour shows that you are mad. I do everything for Him. I do not worship anyone except Him and do not accept anything except from Him." She said this and went away.

The secret of this story lies in her words, "I do everything for Him." Now there are two kinds of people in the world. Some people worship God and think that they are doing this for His sake, but it is really for their own sake. However free from greed they may be, they do have a desire for good in the hereafter, i.e. love for Paradise and fear of Hell. There are others who worship God not out of fear of hell or love for paradise or for any worldly gain, but out of pure love and sincerity for Him. Although the people of the first category are, in a way, right to think that by doing good deeds man avoids hell fire and is entitled to gain paradise. By committing sins, man gets only momentary pleasure and by doing good deeds he is entitled to everlasting pleasure. But God Almighty does not benefit if all of mankind worshipped Him, nor does He lose anything in case all of mankind goes astray. If all human beings become sincere like Abu Bakr Siddiq it is they who benefit, and if all become heretical like Pharaoh it is they who lose. Says Allah in the Holy Qur'an, "If you do good, you do it for yourself. If you do wrong, you do so at your own expense." [17:7]. Again He says, "He who struggles, does so for himself for Allah is *Ghani* (rich)." [29:6].

Consequently, people worship God for their own benefit (everlasting happiness in paradise) and maintain that they do it for God's sake. But this is not true love or sincerity. The lovers of God do not care for profit or loss. They worship God for Himself. However I will say more on this subject in the chapter on Sincerity.

Commentary: Once God Almighty said to Abu Yazid Bistami, "I will give you whatever you want." He said, "My Lord, you know what I want." Said God, "Yes, I know what you want. You want Me from Me. So I give Myself to you."

It is said that when Shaikh Umar ibn Faridh was on his death bed, he was shown seven grades of paradise with a voice saying, "This is your reward." But he turned his face away saying:

"In kana manzilati fil hubbe ma ra'iyta, faqad zayyaito ayami."
(If that is the value of my love for you, I am sorry that I have wasted my life.)

Thereupon he was favoured with a vision (*tajjali*) of pure Essence (*dhat*) and died in it.

Khawaja Ibrahim bin Adham

Amir al-Umara (King of Kings), *Salik-i-Tariq-e-Loqa* (the seeker of God's Beauty), Khawaja Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Adham Mansur, may Allah be pleased with him, was a unique dervish of his time. While he was the leader of mankind he was himself a *murid* of Khawaja Khidhr, peace be upon him. He enjoyed the company of many great *mashaikhs* of his time including Imam Abu Hanifah, may Allah be pleased with him, who was his teacher as well. He was the King of Balkh to begin with. Once he went out for a hunt along with his courtiers. While chasing a deer he lost the company of his men and had strayed far away, when God Almighty made the deer stand and speak to him thus: *"A lihadhi Khuliqat am bihadha umirat."* (Have you been created for game?)

This changed the course of his life. He repented and renounced his Kingdom and took to solitude. He met Hadhrat Fudhail bin Ayadh and Sufyan Thauri and remained with them for a long time. Throughout his life he did not eat anything which he did not earn for himself as wages. He is famous for his pious life and supernatural deeds. He has left many subtle sayings on the mysteries of the Sufi Path. Shaikh Junaid Baghdadi, may Allah bless him, said, "Ibrahim is the Key to all *ulum* (Divine sciences)."

He is reported to have said, "*Ittakhudh Allah sahiban wa dharannas janiban*" (Hold Allah as your friend and leave mankind behind). That is to say, when the seeker is wholly devoted to God and sincerely attached to Him he turns his back on the world, because friendship of God is Eternal and of the world is perishable. They do not go together. Friendship with God is the result of sincerity in obedience to His commands and sincerity in turn is the result of love for God which does not go together with greed for worldly gains. For, he who gets attached to the world gets detached from God and he who shuns greed rests in God. Do you not know what is the world? It is thy attention to thyself. When you give up loving yourself you get rid of love for all else. It is not

possible to love yourself and get rid of the world at the same time. Everybody in the world is destined to something or the other. You should mind your own business and do what you are made for.

Success in the world, both in the spiritual and temporal domains depends on two things: One of which relates to theory and the other to practice. What is in domain of theory is belief in predestination. That is to say, nothing takes place in this universe without the will of God Almighty. What is in the realm of practice is that under no circumstance should man go against the commands of God on pretext of predetermination. Renunciation of the world is not possible without self-renunciation, and once you have renounced yourself you will find the whole of mankind is serving the purpose of God. When you are devoted to God, you will realise that you are promoting the decrees of God. It is therefore not right to attach yourself to the world. If, however, there is no way left for you except the choice between attachment with the world or with yourself, then the best thing is to choose attachment with the world. For attachment with the world is *tauhid* (unification) and attachment with self is nullification.

Commentary: Attachment with the world is conducive to *tauhid* which in essence is the concept of *wahdat-ul-wujud*, which states that when you are attached with the world or with mankind you are really attached to God because nothing in the universe is separate from God's Being. However, if you are attached with yourself, you suffer from egoism which is the greatest veil between you and your Creator.

That is why Shaikh Abul Hasan Salibah, may Allah be pleased with him said, "It is better for man to obey a cat than obey himself (his lower self)." This is because when you are attached with the world you are attached with God (as God's creation) but when you are attached to yourself you are attached to greed, selfishness, and conceit. This will be elaborated at its proper place, God willing.

It is said that when Hadhrat Khawaja Ibrahim bin Adham reached the middle of a great desert on his way to Makkah an old man appeared and said, "Do you know that you are in this horrible desert without food and drink." Hadhrat Ibrahim said, "I knew he was the devil (*shaytan*). I took out four coins which I had earned by selling a basket from my pocket and threw them in the sand (as a token of my firm belief in God's Providence) and made up my mind to say four hundred *raka'ats* (bowings) of prayer at every mile of the journey. It took four years to cross the desert. God Almighty continued to provide most graciously the necessary sustenance to me throughout the journey. In the desert I met Khidhr, peace be upon him, who acquainted me with the Greatest Name of God (*Ism-e-Azam*), which completely detached me from everything other than God."

Bishr Hafi

Sarir-i-ma'rifat (Throne of gnosis) and *Taj-i-ahli muamilat* (Crown of theologians), Hadhrat Bishr al-Hafi was known for *mujahidat* (mortification) and *mu'amilat* (good deeds). He was a disciple of his maternal uncle Abu Ali bin Hashram, and had the benefit of the company of Hadhrat Fudhail bin Ayadh as well. He was well versed in all the branches of Islamic sciences (*ulum*). The story of his *taubah* (conversion) is as follows.

Once he was going somewhere completely drunk, when he saw a piece of paper on which was written, "*Bismillah-hir-Rahman-nir-Rahim*" (In the name of Allah the Most Compassionate and Merciful). He picked it up, cleaned and perfumed it and placed it at a high place. The same night he saw the Almighty Himself in a dream saying, "O Bishr, as you have honoured My name I will honour Thy name both in this world and in the hereafter, so that he who hears it will feel pleased with it." On this he bade farewell to wine and took to the way of asceticism. He remained barefooted throughout his life. When a man asked him the reason, he said, "The earth is the carpet of God, and I do not want to walk over it with my shoes on." This bears testimony to his absolute self abnegation.

He is reported to have said: "He who wishes to be popular in this world and get exalted in the next, should abstain from three things: Firstly, he should not expect anything from anyone; secondly, he should not talk ill of anyone and thirdly, he should not accept anybody's invitation to meals."

For, he who knows God and depends on any other, betrays his own agnosticism. Had he been attached to the Real Giver (*Qadhial hajat*), he would not have knocked at the door of a man like himself. For, if a man asks the favour of another man, it is like a prisoner begging a prisoner for food.

As for talking ill, you should know that he who speaks ill of others is guilty of criticising God since all men and their actions are the creation of God. And he who criticizes man's actions really criticizes God's actions. But there is no harm in criticizing infidels because God Almighty has allowed it on the basis of His own criticism of them.

As regards accepting invitation for food, the correct position is that the real giver of livelihood is God Himself. If He gives it to you through the agency of somebody else, he can, but remember the real giver is God and not the agent. If the agent regards himself to be the real giver and tries to oblige you, you are justified in refusing, for in the matter of providing *rizq* (food) none can presume to be the giver, for that is Allah Himself. This is because according to the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jama'ah*, one's daily bread is God's property and is common for all and the question of obligation to someone else does not arise. However according to the Mutazilites it is the owners' property which is wrong, because it is a concept of the domain of *majaz* (born of temporality) not of reality.

Abu Yazid Bistami

Malak-i-Ma'rifat (angel of Gnosis) and *Falak-i-Muhabbat* (heaven of Love), Hadhrat Abu Yazid Taifur bin Isa Bistami, may Allah be pleased with him, is a Sufi shaikh par excellence, and ranks as the greatest and most glorious of all shaikhs of his time. Junaid said, "*Abu Yazid minna ba manzilata Jibrail min al malaik*" (Abu Yazid among us is like Jibrail among the angels).

His father was one of the divines of Bistam, and his grandfather was a Magian (*magusi*). He has related many *Ahadith* (Sayings) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). He ranks as one of the ten famous *imams* (grand leaders) of *tasawwuf* (Sufism). None before him has plumbed so deep into the subtleties of Sufism. Under all circumstances he demonstrated his respect for *shariat* and love for *tariqat* (Sufi learning), although a section of the accursed heretics did make a vain attempt to associate themselves with him for support. He is known for excessive *mujahidah* (hard struggles) in the way of *tasawwuf* from the beginning to the end of his life. He said, "For thirty years I struggled hard and did not find anything harder than knowledge of the Islamic sciences and acting upon it. Had there been no difference of opinion among the *ulama* of Islam, I would have perished. Difference among the *ulama* is indeed a blessing (in disguise) except in the doctrine of *tajrid* (renunciation) and *tauhid* (unification)." This is quite true because responsibility for one's actions is proportional to one's degree of knowledge. For, you can do a lot of things easily in the state of ignorance, but you cannot advance a step forward in the state of knowledge. The bridge of *shariat* is more arduous than the bridge (*sirat*) of the next world (between heaven and hell as reported in Hadith). So you should try to hold fast the rope of *shariat*, for, in case you falter in the attainment of higher status (*ahwal*), and achievement of loftier stations (*maqamat*), you still remain protected within the safety ring of *shariat*, because the greatest calamity for a seeker is opposition to *shariat*. It is on the anvil of *shariat* that the claims of pretenders are tested and their heresies exposed.

Commentary: Hadhrat Abu Yazid said he would have perished but for the difference among the *ulama*. What it means is, as explained by the Holy Prophet, that the difference of opinion among the scholars of Islam is a blessing in the sense that when there is more than one interpretation of the same issue, the common people are at liberty to follow any group of *ulama*. It is the *ulama* who are answerable to God not the common people. And according to another Hadith the *ulama* are also given the benefit of doubt if they commit an error of judgment in their research in finding the correct solution. It is said in this Hadith that the research scholar who makes an erroneous judgement gets one mark, and he who takes the right decision gets two marks. It goes without saying that Islam is for all times and for

all mankind with different tastes, temperaments, natures, customs, habits, likes and dislikes, and therefore a certain amount of latitude is necessary to give everybody a chance to find a suitable place within the framework of Islamic law for himself. Had there been absolute rigidity it would have been difficult for people of diverse tastes, temperaments and natures to practise Islam. Difference of opinion in Islam is a blessing in disguise and Hadhrat Abu Yazid has rightly said that it saved him from being ruined because he acted upon that interpretation which was the easiest for him to accept.

But mind you, the task of interpretation of the ambiguous issues of Islam has not been left to every Tom, Dick and Harry to play with. It is the highly qualified doctors of Islamic Law who have the right to take decision in the matter. Their qualifications include, proficiency in the Arabic language, Qur'an, Hadith, Fiqh and in all the expert opinions prevailing in the world.

Abu Yazid Bistami has also said, "*Al jannatu la khara laha inda ahli muhabbat, wa ahlul muhabbata mahjubun li muhabbatihim*" (There is no charm in paradise for the lovers who remain concealed under the veil of love). This means that since paradise is created and love is uncreated, the lovers do not attach any importance to paradise. The words, "Lovers are concealed by their love", means that love demands duality (lover and beloved), whilst in *tauhid* (unification known as *wahdat-ul-wujud* in Islam), duality is non-existent and the Friends of God travel from oneness to oneness (that is to say they begin with the knowledge of *wahdat-ul-wujud* and end with the realization or the actual experience of *wahdat-ul-wujud*). However love presupposes two beings, that of the lover and of the beloved. It happens that sometimes God is the lover and the seeker is the beloved, and sometimes the seeker is the lover and God is the beloved. In either case the veil of duality persists (which distinguishes the lover from the beloved) and is therefore the cause of separation between them, while the goal is total annihilation (*fana*) of the lover and *baqa* of the Beloved. So the most perfect state of affairs is that the lover gains the state of *fana* through love and does not gain the state of *baqa* through love.

Commentary: It is necessary to mention here that Hadhrat Abu Yazid Bistami was the advocate of the state of *fana* and Hadhrat Junaid of *baqa*. The former was of the view that *fana* is the highest goal in Islam, while the latter maintained that *baqa* was the higher stage. Now keeping this controversy between the two shaikhs of Islam in mind, it becomes easy to understand the above mentioned saying of Hadhrat Abu Yazid Bistami who gave preference to the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* over *baqa-bi-Allah*. But actually the controversy resolves itself when we see that the *mashaikh* advocating *baqa* as the final stage, do recommend the state of *fana*

coexisting with the state of *baqa*, known as *jamiyyat* which means the coexistence of *fana* and *baqa* at the same time. This fact has already been elucidated earlier, and more light will be thrown on it in the Chapter on *fana* and *baqa*.

Hadhrat Abu Yazid Bistami said, "Once I went to Makkah for *hajj* and saw the house (Ka'bah) without the owner of the house (God), and said to myself perhaps my *hajj* has not been accepted because I have seen many stone buildings like the Ka'bah. When I went to *hajj* for the second time I saw both the house and the Owner of the house. I thought I was still far from *tauhid*. When I went for the third time I saw the owner but the house was not there. At this moment I heard a voice saying, "O Abu Yazid, had you seen the entire universe and not seen yourself, you would not be a *mushryk* (polytheist). On the other hand, you become a *mushryk* when you see yourself and do not see the universe." He said, "On hearing this I repented that minute kind of polytheism. Then I repented from repentance itself, that is to say from the pride of repenting and finally I repented the misconception of my own being."

Commentary: This is an admonition due to the fact that he was still there as an observer in Makkah, and retained his individuality (*doi*) as an observer. The ideal state of being is total self annihilation (*fana*) in God's Being. This again is true of Hadhrat Abu Yazid himself, who believed in *fana* as the final stage. Had there been Junaid in his place he would not have been reproached as his emphasis was on *baqa*. So in short, there is no real difference between the two shaikhs. It is only the question of emphasis. One shaikh laid emphasis on *fana* and the other on *baqa* and our author, Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri with the vast majority of mashaikh favours the latter course because *baqa* or *abdiyat* was the chief characteristic of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w) and his companions.

Abu Abdullah al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi

Imam-i-Funum (Doctor of Learning) and Knower of Secrets, Hadhrat Abu Abdullah al-Harith bin Asad al-Muhasibi was well versed in all the Islamic sciences and their branches and was the focus of attraction for the *ulama* and divines of his time. He was the author of several books including *Raghaib*. His status in knowledge of the exoteric and esoteric sciences was so high that he was known as the Shaikh al-Mashaikh (the Shaikh of Shaikhs) of Baghdad. He said, "*Al-ilmo biharkatil qulubi fi mutaliatul ghayabi ashrafun min al ilm biharkatil jawarih*" (Knowledge of the unseen obtained through the inner sight (of the *qalb*) is better than action performed by outer limbs.) This means that he who has knowledge (gnosis) of the unseen is better than he who is engaged in liturgy

(deeds) and has no access to the unseen. Knowledge (*ilm*) takes you in the presence of God, while ignorance (*jahl*) drives you away from Him. Knowledge is, therefore, superior to action (*amal*). You cannot understand God by deeds, but you can by knowledge. If deeds without knowledge were enough for an approach to God, then Christians and monks engaged in rigorous *mujahidah* (austerities) would have reached the stage of *mushahidah* (presence or union with God), and the *mu'mins* (true believers) without deeds (*amal*) would have been deprived of God's presence or vision. *Amal* (action) is the quality (*sifat*) of man and *ilm* (knowledge) is the quality of God. Another version of this saying is, "*Al amalo biharkatil qulubi asbrafun min al amal biharktil jawari*h" (Actions done by the heart are superior to those done by the limbs).

This version is incorrect. For no action is possible without the heart coming into play. Even this version establishes the superiority of knowledge, because the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "*Tafakkaru saatin khairun min ibadati sittina sanah*" (An hour's contemplation is better than sixty years of formal/ritual worship). This is because worship springing from the heart is better than that springing from the limbs. It is more effective and nearer to perfection. It is therefore said, "*Naom al alimi ibadatun wa sihr al jahli maasiyatum*" (The sleep of the *alim* (gnostic) is worship and the vigilance of the ignorant is a sin). This is because the gnostic's soul is intoxicated both during sleep and wakefulness. When his soul is overwhelmed, his body is also overwhelmed. Therefore, mastery of the soul is better than mastery of the *nafs* (carnal self) even if the limbs are busy in worship.

Commentary: This does not mean that actions of piety and worship have no value. What it means is that deeds committed in the state of knowledge (which really means gnosis) are better than actions committed in the state of ignorance.

He has also said, "*Kun li Allah wal illa fala takun*" (Live by God or do not live at all). This means that the ideal state is to be *baqi-bi-Allah*. If you cannot achieve it, then lose yourself in God and be *fani-fi-Allah*. Either achieve the state of *jamiyyat* which consists of both *fana* and *baqa* called *safwat*, as explained in the introduction, or be completely merged in God through total renunciation of self called *faqr*. Be *baqi-bi-Allah* or *fani-fi-Allah*. Either you should be in the state as is mentioned the verse, "*Usjudu li Adam*" (Bow down to Adam) [2:34], or as stated in the verse, "*Hal ata ala al insani henun min dakri lam yakum shai*" (There was a time man was non-existent) [76:1]. If you surrender yourself to God in this world you will be emancipated in the next world. If you do not then you will be a prisoner in the hands of God.

Commentary: According to first verse you are in the state of *baqa-bi-Allah* worshipping God. In the second you are in *fana-fi-Allah* having no existence at all.

Abu Sulaiman Daud bin al-Tai

Hadhrat Abu Sulaiman Daud bin Tai was the Imam of those who had renounced the world and had turned their backs on position and glory. He was the greatest shaikh of his time, leader of all those devoted to Sufism, and really a unique personality. He was a disciple of Imam Abu Hanifah, and a contemporary of Hadhrat Fudhail bin Ayadh and Ibrahim bin Adham etc. As a Sufi he was a *murid* of Habib Rayi. In the realm of knowledge he was the *Alim al-Ulama* (master of the masters) and in the realm of *fiqh* (jurisprudence) he was the *Fiqih-al-Fuqaha* (Jurist of the jurists). He renounced the world and took to asceticism and was fully devoted to God all the time.

He said to one of his *murids*, *"In aradta salamata sallim ala dunya wa in aradtal karmata kabbir ala akhirat"* (If you want *salaamat* [safety] say *salaam* [good bye] to this world and if you want *karamat* [miracles] kill all ambitions for the next world). That is to say both of these worlds are veils between you and God. These two succinct statements encapsulate between them the essence of wisdom. He who desires physical welfare let him renounce this world and he who desires spiritual welfare let him renounce the hereafter. It is said that he always remained in the company of Muhammad bin al-Hasan and never went anywhere near Qadhi Abu Yusuf. (These two are famous disciples of Imam Abu Hanifah. The former took to perfection in *fiqh*, and the latter had accepted the office of *qadhi*).

When he was asked, "Why do you love one and hate the other when both of them are great scholars?" He said, "Because Muhammad bin al-Hasan has renounced wealth and accepted knowledge and Abu Yusuf has renounced knowledge and accepted wealth." Hadhrat Ma'ruf Karkhi said, "I have never seen a man greater than Daud Tai in hating the world and everything that belongs to it and loving the *fuqara* (dervishes) of whatever denomination they be.

Commentary: The critics would jump at the throat of the Sufi and say, "Look here, the Sufis are not Muslims, they renounce the world like Hindu and Christian monks." They forget that the Prophet (s.a.w.) also abstained from worldly charms, honour and respect, and was contented to eat hard barley bread and lived in a small hut although he was an equal of kings and monarchs. The critics forget what fate wealth-loving people like Pharaoh, Nimrod and Qarun met.

Abul Hasan Sari Saqti

Shaikh of *Ahl Haqaiq* (the Shaikh of gnostics), *wa mumquta anil alaiq* (detached from all worldly associations), Abul Hasan Sari bin Muflis As-Saqti was the maternal uncle of Junaid, may Allah be pleased with them. He was well versed in all the Islamic sciences

(*ulum*), and was a prominent Sufi saint. He was the first to have arranged and described the various states and stations of the spiritual journey in detail. Most of the shaikhs of Iraq were his *murid*. He had had the company of Habib Rayi, and was a *murid* of Hadhrat Ma'ruf Karkhi.

He used to be a dealer in second hand goods. One day when the bazaar caught fire, he was told that his shop had been burnt. He said, "Thank God I got rid of it." However when he went there he found the shop intact while all the shops on the right and left had been burnt. Seeing this he gave away everything to the poor, and took to the Sufi Path. On being asked how he began this journey he said, "Once Habib Rayi came to my shop and I gave him a few pieces of bread to feed the dervishes." He said, "May God bless you," and went away. From the day he uttered that prayer, I felt no charm in worldly possessions and eventually I got rid of them.

Charms of God Vision (Didar)

He is related to have said, "*Allahumma muhima adhabtani bi shaiyin fala tuadhini bidhili al-hijab.*" (O Lord, whatever punishment you award me, please do not punish me with the mortification of *hijab* [i.e. veil]). This means that when the seeker is not veiled from God he can easily bear all tortures and afflictions because of the state of intoxication in God. But when he is veiled, even the gifts and favours of God would torture him. For affliction which is accompanied by the Beloved's vision (*mushahidah*) is no affliction. Real affliction is the veil even if it is accompanied by bounties. In Hell, there is no torture severer than the torture of being veiled from God. If the inmates of Hell enjoyed God's vision, they would not even think of Paradise. For, the fascination of the Beloved's Vision is so great that the physical torment of Hell is not felt at all.

Similarly, in paradise there is no pleasure so great as the charm of the Beloved's Vision. If one is veiled from God, all the pleasures of paradise doubled a hundred times, would torment him. It is, therefore, God's habit that in all circumstances, He, in His eternal Grace, enables His friends to have the benefit of the charms of His Beauty, so that they can bear all the hardships, afflictions and calamities of human life cheerfully and exclaim, "Dear Beloved! We love Thy afflictions better than Thy veils, for when we are charmed with Thy Beauty all pains and pangs turn into pleasures." God knows best.

Abu Ali Shaqiq Balkhi

Sorhang-e-ahle bala (the head of the people of affliction), *Maya-e-Zuhd wa Taqwa* (The pride of asceticism and piety), Abu Ali Shaqiq bin Ibrahim-al-Arzi, was the beloved leader of the Sufi community of his time and versed in all the Islamic sciences dealing with *shariat*, *tariqat* and *haqiqat*. He was the author of a large number of books on various aspects of the Sufi Doctrine. He was a companion of Hadhrat Ibrahim bin Adham and other shaikhs of his time.

The Pious Do Not Die

He is reported to have said, "*Jaala Allah-o ahl-li-taat ahyaun fi mamatihim wa ahl al-maasi amwata fi hayatihim*" (God has made his obedient servants alive in the state of death, and the disobedient dead in the state of life). That is to say the obedient even if he is dead physically, is alive spiritually, and the angels go on blessing him till the Day of Judgement.

Once an old man came to him and said, "O shaikh I am a great sinner. I have come to repent at your hands." He said, "It is too late." The old man said, "No, it is too early." The shaikh said "How?" He said, "Because I have come before death, and he who repents before death repents in time."

The story of his conversion (*taubah*) is that once his country Balkh was hit by such a severe famine that people started feeding on the dead. In this state of affliction all round he saw a slave laughing heartily in the bazaar, and making merry. People said to him, "Are you not ashamed of yourself? You are making merry while mankind is in deep suffering." He retorted back, "I am not at all worried, because my master owns a village." This set Shaqiq thinking, "Lord God! This slave is making merry because his master is the sole owner of a village. Is there any occasion for worry on my part when my Master is the Monarch of all monarchs, and is fully alive to catering for the needs of all creatures?" So he renounced the world, took to path of Truth and did not worry about his daily requirements any more. He used to say, "I am the disciple of that slave and what I achieved is through him." This is of course, due to humility on his part. His merits are well known and too many to be recorded here.

Shaikh Abu Sulaiman Darani

Shaikh-e-Waqte Khud (the Shaikh of his time), *Tariq-e-Haq mujarrad* (unique as a wayfarer of the Path of God), Hadhrat Abu Sulaiman Abdur Rahman Atiyya al-Darani was loved by his people as the flower and fragrance of their hearts. He was well known for his hard striving (*mujahidah*) in the path of Sufism, and was perfect in its theory and practice. He was a past master in diagnosing the evils of *nafs* (base/lower self) and curing them. He was the author of the most beautiful sayings on the subjects of Sufi etiquette, protection of the heart, mind and body from the evils of the lower/animal self. He said, "*Idha ghalaba ar-rija ala al-khauf fasda al-waqt*" (When *khauf* [fear of God] is overpowered by *rija* [hope], the seeker's condition worsens).

Commentary: As will be seen later, *khauf* and *rija* (fear and hope) are the two necessary components of faith. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "Man's faith (*iman*) is

between fear and hope." It means that the believer should be hopeful of God's mercy and forgiveness and at the same time fearful of his Majesty and retribution and that none of these feelings should be allowed to overpower the other.

Waqt in this saying means the spiritual state of the seeker. So long as the seeker keeps a watch over his spiritual state, he is fearful of God's anger. The moment fear of God vanishes, his spiritual condition undergoes a change for the worse. On the other hand, if his fear overshadows his hope his concept of *tauhid* suffers, since excessive fear breeds hopelessness or disappointment in God which is again un-Islamic and amounts to *shyrk* (polytheism). *Tauhid* is safeguarded by a well-balanced combination of fear and hope. When the required balance between the two is established both *tauhid* and *waqt* (spiritual state) are safe. The seeker becomes a *mu'min* (true believer) by preservation of *tauhid* and of his spiritual state (*waqt*). *Rija* is based on pure vision (*mushahidah*) of Divine Beauty and brings peace and tranquillity, while *khauf* is based on pure struggle for vision and is characterized by restlessness and worry. Since *mushahidah* is the result of *mujahidah*, we may say that hopefulness is the result of hopelessness. This means that when a seeker is in the state of hopelessness, he struggles hard, achieves his objects and becomes full of hope. This is how his hopelessness breeds hopefulness. God has mercy on him, he reaches his goal, is happy because all the secrets of life are made known to him.

Ahmad bin Abi al-Hawari, may Allah be pleased with him said, "Once I was saying my prayer in the night and felt cheerful. Next day I reported the matter to Shaikh Abu Sulaiman Darani who said, "What a weak person you are! You are still under the influence of the people, since your spiritual state is affected by their presence and absence." There is nothing in the world more harmful than what stands between you and the Almighty. When the bride is exhibited to the people it is because everyone may see her, praise her and respect her. But if she looks at anybody except the bridegroom she is disgraced. So the seeker should have the strength not to be affected by the people's admiration. If he does that he is ruined. God forbid!

Ma'ruf Karkhi

Mutaaliq Dargahi Raza, (characterised by the quality of *raza* or *ridha* or pleasure of God), *Parwardai* Ali bin Musa al-Raza (the favourite of Hadhrat Imam Musa Ali al-Raza), Abdul Mahfuz Ma'ruf bin Firoz al-Karkhi is one of the earliest shaikhs and a leader of the Sufi community. He is known for his chivalry (in Sufism), piety and devotion to God. He would have been mentioned earlier if the chronological order had been followed. But in utilising this order of precedence I have followed two great shaikhs: Abu Abdur Rahman Sulami whose book *Tabaqat-e-Sufiya* and my Master, Imam Abdul Qasim Qushairi's *Risalah* follow the same order of describing the accounts of the Sufi saints as I have done in this book.

Hadhrat Ma'ruf Karkhi is the *murid* of Daud Tai, and the Shaikh of Sari Saqti, may Allah be pleased with them. He embraced Islam at the hands of Imam Ali bin Musa al-Raza who loved and honoured him very much. He is a man of many merits and virtues, and was, therefore, a perfect guide in Sufism.

He said, "*Lil fatiyani thalatha alamat, wafa bila khilaf, wa madhum bila jud, waataum bi la sawal*" (There are three signs of greatness: loyalty without opposition, praise without return, generosity without asking). Loyalty without opposition is that when worshipping God, man should not go against any of His commands. Praise without return means that he should praise others without expecting any return or reward and without expecting similar behaviour from them. Generosity without asking is that he should give before being asked and save others from the humiliation of making a request. These three qualities are really qualities of God which have been borrowed by mankind in dealing with one another. In dealing with His friends, God Almighty never goes against these principles. He never goes against His promise made to them, even if they do not keep theirs. Another proof of God keeping His word is that in the hereafter He conversed with the souls of men without seeing any virtue in them and in this world. He does not drive them away because of the bad deeds committed by them. Similarly praise without return is God's quality because He sees no good in man and yet praises him. So far as giving without being asked is concerned, that is also purely a Divine attribute. He is generous and knows what man needs and gives without being asked. So when God Almighty elevates his friends and bestows upon them the status of nearness to Himself by virtue of His three attributes mentioned above, His friends in turn, behave with their fellow men in the same manner, (as far as it is humanly possible). This behaviour on their part is known as *Fatwat* (chivalry or generosity) and their names are registered in the list of *Fatiyan* (chivalrous). Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, was truly qualified in these qualities. This will be further elaborated at its proper place, God willing.

Hatim al-Asam

Zain al-Ibad (gem of the pious), *Jamal al-Autad* (beauty of the saints), Abu Abdur Rahman Hatim bin Unwan al-Asam was one of the dignitaries of Balkh and one of the earliest *mashaikhs* of Khurasan. He was a *murid* of Hadhrat Shaqiq Balkhi and the shaikh of Ahmad Khadhroya. From the beginning to the end of his life he never budged an inch from the path of *sidq* (sincerity). It is for this reason that Junaid said, "*Siddique zamanina al-Asamma*" (The Siddiq of our age is Asam). He has some subtle sayings on the delicate mischiefs of *nafs* (the lower self) and the haughtiness of human nature. He is the author of several books on social behaviour (*mu'amilat*). He said, "Lust is of three kinds, lust for eating, lust for speaking and lust for looking at beautiful faces." The way to guard against the first is to trust in God, against the second is to speak the truth, and the third is to look at everything with *ibrat* (wondrous praise for the Creator). So he who trusts in God gets rid of his lust for eating; he who speaks the truth gets rid of his lust for speaking; and he who looks at things with righteous eyes gets rid of lust for beautiful

faces. Trust in God (*tawakkal*) springs from right thinking, that is to say when he knows that the real giver is God he stops looking to others for bread (*rizq*). It is then that his worship is oriented in the right direction and his speech and his outlook are set right, so that these actions are sanctified purely on acts of love and friendship with the Almighty. At that stage what he eats and drinks is for God, what he speaks is for God i.e. nothing but truth, and what he sees is nothing but God's vision. For, it is not right in the matter of love and friendship to eat what God forbids, to speak what He does not command and to see aught but Him in everything. At this stage what he eats, what he speaks and what he looks are no longer through lust. But before this change whatever you eat, even if it is lawful (*halal*), is through lust, what you speak although it is truth, is lust and when you look at anyone even with good intentions, it is lust.

Imam Shafiyi

Imam-i-Muttalabi (the Imam of the Prophet's family), the son of the uncle of the Prophet, Abu Abdullah bin Idris as-Shafiyi ranks as one of the great divines of his time, well versed in all the Islamic sciences. He is famous for his severe austerity, deep piety and lofty sayings. He was a disciple of Imam Malik during his stay in Madinah. When he went to Iraq he associated with Imam Muhammad bin al-Hasan (a disciple of Imam Abu Hanifah). By nature he was a lover of solitude and wanted to perfect himself in Sufism, but when people like Imam Ahmad bin Hambal thronged around him for guidance, he became busy in *Imamat* (leadership) and scholarship at the expense of solitude. Under all circumstances he retained excellent moral qualities. In his early Sufi life he was extremely God fearing. He met Shayban Rayi and had the benefit of his company for some time. After that wherever he went he remained in search of Truth.

He said, "If you see a divine (religious scholar) engaged in finding back doors to religious issues, by resorting to all sorts of interpretations, you can be sure he will not be able to accomplish anything." This means that the *ulama* are the leaders of mankind and none is allowed to bypass them in the matter of interpreting Islam. The path of God cannot be traversed except with caution and self mortification. He who seeks easy back doors is a man guilty of escapism. To find back doors is the habit of common folks and is wholly unbecoming for religious scholars who should aim for higher objectives in the realm of spirituality. The *ulama* are the elite who should never stoop to worldly gains. If they do so, they will not be able to accomplish anything. Moreover, seeking back doors amounts to slighting God's commands and one who slights God's commands is not a friend of His.

One of the *mashaikhs* said, "Once I saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in a dream. I said to him, 'O Prophet of God. I have heard one of your sayings to the effect that God sends *auliya*, *autad* and *abrar* in the world to look after it. Is it true?' He said, 'Yes, that is true'. I said, 'Can I see one of them?' He said, 'Yes. One of them is Muhammad bin Idris (as-Shafiyi).' " Imam Shafiyi is a man of so many merits that they cannot be described in this short space.

Imam Ahmad bin Hambal

Shaikh-e-Sunnat (the upholder of Sunnah of the Prophet) and *Qahir-i-ahli-bid'at* (executioner of the heretics), Abu Muhammad Ahmad bin Hambal was famous for his piety and *taqwa* (purity). He was also a *Hafiz al-Hadith* (knew the Hadith of the Prophet [s.a.w.] by heart). He was popular among both the Sufis and the *Fuqaha* (jurists), and had the benefit of the company of the *mashaikhs* of high ranks like Dhunnun Misri, Bishr al-Hafi, Sari Saqti, Ma'ruf Karkhi and others. He was a man of visible miracles (*karamat*) and spiritual insight (*farasat*).

Those who blame him for *tashbih* (anthropomorphism) are wrong. It is a wild lie and pure fabrication. He is firm in Islamic Theology and stands exonerated by the consensus of *ulama*. When the Mutazilites (rationalists) rose to power in Baghdad, they tortured him and tried to force him to declare that the Qur'an was temporal (not eternal). Despite the fact that he was old and infirm, they tied his hands behind his back and beat him with lashes to force him to declare that the Qur'an was *makhluq* (non eternal). However, he did not succumb to coercion and remained steadfast in his belief. When he was being manhandled, the string of his trousers broke and he was about to be naked. As his hands were tied, another pair of hands appeared from out of the blue and tied the strings (thus saving him from being exposed). On seeing this miracle his tormentors freed him but he died later on as a result of the wounds he had sustained. Towards the end of his life he was asked of his opinion about the tyrants who had tortured him. He said, "I think they beat me for God's sake, thinking I was wrong and they were right. So I have no complaint against them."

He was well versed in the science of social behaviour (*mu'amilat*). If anybody came to him to enquire about the laws governing social behaviour, he would give the reply himself. On the other hand, if the issue was related to *Haqaiq* (God's Truth), he referred them to Shaikh Bishr al-Hafi.

He was once asked, "What is *ikhlas* (sincerity)?" He said, "*Al ikhlaso howa khalasum min aftil aamal*" (*Ikhlas* [sincerity] is *khalas* [immunity] from the curse [*afat*] of good deeds [*aamal*]). That is to say your deeds should be free from the contamination of *riya* (ostentation), hypocrisy and selfishness.

When asked what is *tawakkal* (trust) he said, "*Tawakkal* is full trust in God." It means that it is God alone who gives our daily bread, and none other. When he was asked what is *raza* (or *ridha*), he said, "*Tuslim ul ameer ila Allah*" (*Ridha* is resignation to the will of God). That is to say you should leave everything to God.

Commentary: This does not mean that you should not do anything. What it means is that you should work hard and leave result to God and be satisfied with the result.

He was asked, "What is love?" He said, "Put this question to Bishr Hafi, for as long as he is alive, I cannot answer it."

Imam Ahmad was always a victim of trials and tribulations. During his life time he was tormented by the Mutazilites and after death, he was accused of anthropomorphic tendencies so much so that even the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* reproach him for heresy which he does not deserve.

Commentary: What is meant by the cult of Anthropomorphism is that God has a body like human beings. This is called *tajseem* or *tashbih* in Islamic scholasticism and is regarded as heretical by the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah*. Imam ibn Taimiyya is also blamed for this cult and was subjected to life imprisonment. God knows best.

Ahmad bin al-Hawari

Sirajal Waqt (Candle or light of the time), *mashraq afatul maqt* (aware of the abomination of sins), Abul Hasan Ahmad bin Abi al-Hawari was the greatest shaikh of Sham (Syria), so admired by all the saints that Junaid said, "Ahmad al-Hawari is the flower of Sham." He has left behind lofty sayings and subtle allegories in the science of *tariqat*, and an authentic collections of Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.). He was the centre of attraction for all classes of people in his country. He was a *murid* of Abu Sulaiman Darani and had enjoyed the company of Sufyan bin Ainiya and Marwan bin Muawiyah al-Qari as well. He travelled widely and derived benefit from every saint he met. He said, "The world is a heap of filth where the dogs collect and fill their bellies and come back, but the lovers of the world are worse than dogs because they remain on it for good." The world was so much degraded in his eyes that he called it a heap of filth and those who are attracted by it are dogs, even worse than dogs, for dogs fill their bellies and leave it but worldly people do not. This shows how he hated the world and all who loved it because the Friends of God find pleasure and happiness in renouncing the world, and not being steeped in and destroyed by it.

He started education as a novice and reached the stage of an *imam* in knowledge in the end. Thereafter, he took all his books to the river and threw them in it saying: "You were the best guide to me. Now that I have reached the destination, the guide is no longer necessary." The guide is necessary only when the pilgrim is on the way, and has not reached his destination. As regards the saying, "*Wasalto faqad fasala*" (Union is followed by separation), it means that the journey and the destination are two separate things and are human qualities but union and separation are Divine acts and are not within the power of man. Union with God is the result of God's grace and not of man's

efforts. Similarly his separation from God is in the hands of God and there is no change in this principle.

Commentary: Actually the phrase "union is followed by separation" has two meanings. One is that when the seeker has reached the highest degree of *fana* in accordance with his capacity, he has to come back to himself and resume his individual position as a teacher, guide or whatever duties he is assigned. This is a normal course and every saint has to go through it in Islamic Sufism. Another meaning of the phrase "union is followed by separation" is that since there is no end to God's Being, the seeker goes on and on flying into vast limitless realm of Divinity. When he reaches a stage (*manzil*) of union he sees that there is another stage above it, when he reaches that stage he see another one above it and so on. Now because this state of reaching a stage of union is followed by more effort on his part to reach the higher stage, it can be said that union is followed by separation. It is on this account that prominent shaikhs always complain of pangs of separation in the midst of union. Saadi Shirazi said, "The wonder is not that I am mad in Thy love, the wonder is that I am tortured by pangs of separation in the state of union (*man wasil o mahjuram*)." This is the highest peak in spiritual progress and is known as *jamiyyat* which means combination of both *fana* and *baqa* at the same time.

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi, say that perhaps by the word "*wusul*" (union) the venerable shaikh meant 'the way to union'. When the seeker comes on the road to God, the guide is no more necessary, for the journey in God (*fana*) cannot possibly be described by word of mouth much less by books.

There are some more *mashaikh* who have done the same thing. For instance, Shaikh Abu Said Fadhl Allah bin Muhammad al-Mahini etc. also threw their books in the sea. Charlatans have imitated them to conceal their inability and laziness, without knowing that the great saints threw their books in the sea in the state of utter detachment from everything other than God when nothing but God could satisfy them. But the fact is that such things as throwing of books in the sea are the result of *sukr* (intoxication) which is a characteristic of the novices in Sufism. So far as the finalists (*mutamakkin*) are concerned, the whole universe cannot veil them from God not to speak of a piece of paper. When the heart is detached from everything other than God, how can a piece of paper stand between it and God. So the throwing of books on the shaikh's part was really the result of his contempt for words which cannot possibly describe the secrets of Divine Truth. So the best thing is that the tongue should cease to speak words, for what is written in the books are also words and there is no difference between them. But I am of the opinion that what Shaikh Ahmad al-Hawari said was the result of the state of spiritual intoxication and because he could speak to nobody, he went on writing what he experienced. Finding none capable of keeping these secrets, he threw them over board

and said, "You guided me to Truth and now that I have realised Truth, you are not needed." It is also possible that he may have collected a large number of books which interfered with his recitations and other pursuits and therefore got rid of them. God knows better.

Ahmad bin Khadhroya

Sarhang-i-Jawan mardan (Commander of Chivalrous) and *Aftab-e-Khurasan* (Sun of the elect), Abu Hamid Ahmad bin Khadhroya al-Balkhi was famous for his lofty spiritual status and perfection. He was the greatest shaikh of his time and popular among all, high and low. He took to the path of *malamat* (self-abasement) and wore the dress of the warriors.

His wife, Fatimah, who was the daughter of the *Amir* (ruler) of Balkh, was also a saint of a high order. When she felt the need for conversion she sent a message to Ahmad Khadhroya to approach her father to give her in marriage. But he (the shaikh) did not agree. She sent another message with this message, "O Ahmad, I thought you were great enough to be a *rahbar* (leader) for a woman in the way of God and not a *rahbur* (robber)." The shaikh agreed and asked her father to give her in marriage. He accepted the offer as a blessing (*tabarruk*) and the marriage was celebrated. Hence forward Fatimah gave up all worldly associations and took to solitude along with her husband.

Once Ahmad bin Khadroya went to see Shaikh Abu Yazid and his wife went with him. When they went in, she unveiled herself and went on talking to the shaikh in the most impertinent manner. Ahmad was upset and asked her to behave. She said, "This is because you are my *mahram* (lawful associate) by virtue of *tabiyat* (gender) and the shaikh is my *mahram* by virtue of *tariqat* (Sufism). Through you I reached *hawa* (lust), and through him I reached *Khuda* (God). This is evident from the fact that he is *beniyaz* (has no need) of my company, and you are *muhtaj* (needy) of it." She continued to behave in that manner till one day Shaikh Abu Yazid happened to see her hand coloured with henna and said, "Why have you coloured your hand?" She said, "O Abu Yazid, so long as you were unaware of my hand and its colour there was no harm but now that you have seen (the beauty of) my hand it is no longer lawful (in *shariat*) to sit with you." Saying this the couple went to Nishapur and took up residence there to the satisfaction of the people and the *mashaikh* of that place. When Shaikh Yahya bin Muadh ar-Razi came to Nishapur, Ahmad wished to invite him to his house and consulted his wife in the matter. She said "If you want to invite him, please arrange for so many cows, so many goats, so many loaves of breads, candles and perfumes and twenty donkeys also." Ahmad said, "What do we want donkeys for?" She said, "When the generous are invited by the generous, dogs of the area also come. Why should they go without food?" Abu Yazid said, "He who wants to see a *wali Allah* concealed in a female dress, he should see Fatimah." Abu Hafs Haddad said, "Had there been no Ahmad Khadhroya, chivalry would not have been displayed."

He is the author of several books on various subjects such as social behaviour, etiquettes of *tariqat* (Sufism) and the finer points of *haqiqat* (Reality). He said, "*At-tariqo wazih wal haqqo laih, war-rayi qad ismaa fa ma tahayyaro baadaha illa min-al-aama*" (The road is clear and God is manifest, therefore, O seeker your worry is through your own blindness). This means that when the way to God is ablaze, and God Himself is as manifest as the sun, you have to seek only yourself. When you have known what you are, you are bound to come headlong for God is more manifest than you are. He has also said, "*Ustur izzaka al-faqrika anil khalq*" (Conceal the beauty of your dervishhood (*faqr*) from the people). That is to say do not disclose your dervishhood to anyone, so that your secret remains intact, since this is the greatest gift of the Almighty.

He is reported to have related the following story. "Once a dervish invited a wealthy person to his house during Ramadhan (month of fasting) and laid before him a dry loaf of bread. When the guest went back to his house, he sent a bag of gold to the dervish. However, the dervish did not accept it and sent it back saying, 'This is the punishment of disclosing the secret of my dervishhood to a person like you.'" This shows how firm he was in sincerity and renunciation.

Abu Turab al-Nasfi

Imam-e-Mutawakkilan (Leader of those who have trust in God), *wa guzida-e-ahlezaman* (respected by mankind), Abu Turab Askar bin al-Hussain al-Nasfi may Allah be pleased with him, is one of the greatest and most honoured mashaikh of Khurasan. He is famous for asceticism, piety and *Karamat* (miracles). He travelled widely and witnessed numerous wonders of God in the deserts. He lived all alone in solitary jungles and died in a desert near Basrah. His body was found after some years dried up standing straight facing Ka'bah with a staff in hand and a water bucket lying in front. No beast of jungle dared touch him or pull him down.

He says, "*Al faqairo qutohu ma wajada, libasohu ma satar wa muskanohu haitho nazala*" (A *faqir* [dervish] is he who eats what comes to him, wears what conceals his nakedness and rests where he sits.) That is to say he does not exercise his own will in selecting food, clothes and shelter for himself. He leaves everything to God, because all the mischief is caused by getting entangled in these three things. This is the worldly point of view. But from the spiritual point of view, the food of the dervish is *wajd* (ecstasy), his dress is *taqwa* (piety) and his abode is *ghaib* (the unseen world).

Says God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an: "*Wa an lawistaqamaa 'ala tariqat lasqayna hum ma'un ghadqa",* i.e. "If you are firm on *tariqat* (spiritual path), We will inundate you with (rain) water." [72:16]. He says in another verse, "*Wa rishun wa libusun al-taqwa*" (We gave them the dress of *taqwa* (piety) which is the best dress). [7:26]. The Holy Prophet, (s.a.w.) said, "*Al faqro watnun ghaib*" (Sainthood is living in the unseen). This shows that the real *faqir* (saint) is he whose food and drink is God's nearness (presence),

whose dress is piety (*taqwa*), whose abode is the unseen and whose ambition is union (with God). This is the highest status in Sufism.

Commentary: Those who say that the word *tariqat* (Sufism) was not in vogue in the Prophet's time and therefore it has nothing to do with Islam, should note that the very word *tariqat* is mentioned by God Himself in the verse mentioned above.

Yahya bin Muadh Razi

Lisan-e-Mohabbat wa wafa (tongue of love and fidelity), *Zain-e-Tariqat wa wila* (ornament of Sufism and sainthood), Abu Zakariya Yahya bin Muadh ar-Razi was a man of high status and good conduct. He was firm as a rock in his contentment with God's will. That is why Husri said, "God had two Yahyas. One was a prophet and the other a *wali* (friend of God). Yahya bin Zakariya was firm in *khauf* (fear) of God and Yahya bin Muadh in *rija* (hope), so much so that the former's faith in doctrine of fear had shaken all who claimed fear of God so that they lost all hopes of salvation and the latter's faith in hope surpassed all others.

When Shaikh Husri was asked, "We know all about Yahya bin Zakariya, but we do not know anything about Yahya bin Muadh. Tell us something about him?" He said, "I have been told that he never went through conversion. He was before what he is now. He never committed a sin, and was unique in social behaviour and good manners." One of his disciples said, "O my master you believe in *rija* but in practice you are the most fearful man on earth. How is this?" He replied, "My son, know that *khauf* and *rija* (fear and hope) are two pillars of *iman* (faith) without which man goes astray. A man cannot possibly go astray so long as he holds fast to these pillars. He who fears God worships Him for fear of being rejected, and he who has hope on His mercy worships Him in the hope of union (*wasl*). So the main thing is worship, without which fear and hope lose their meaning. Without worship, religion becomes only a theory and loses its vitality."

He is the author of several books containing subtle truths and fine allegories. He is the first man after the Righteous Caliphs (*Khulafa-i-Rashidin*) who ascended the pulpit to lecture. I love his sayings which are extremely subtle, fiery in nature and sweet to listen. He said: "This world is full of *ashghal* (works) and the next is full of *ahwal* (troubles and fears). And man is haunted by the thought of both till he finds abode in paradise or hell." How lucky is he who tears himself from both and gets attached to the Almighty.

As regards the controversy over poverty and richness he gave preference to the latter. On being overwhelmed by debts, he left Ray for Khurasan where he was forced to live, by the people. He stayed there for a long time and gave sermons. When he had collected enough money to repay the debts, he left for Ray but was robbed of everything on his

way back home. He died in Nishapur. Under all circumstances he behaved excellently and was loved by mankind.

Abu Hafs Nishapuri

Shaikhul Mashaikh (Shaikh of Shaikhs), *wa Nadira-e-zamin-wa-zaman* (unique on earth), Abu Hafs Umar bin Salim al-Haddad Nishapuri may Allah be pleased with him, was one of the divines and leaders of the community and was popular among all the shaikhs of his time. He was a disciple of Abu Abdullah of Bayward and a friend of Ahmad Khadhroya. Shah Shuja went all the way from Karman to see him. When he went to Baghdad to visit the *mashaikh* there, he did not know Arabic. His disciples were worried about it and whispered to one another, "It is a pity the great Shaikh of Khurasan does not know the Arabic language and stands in need of an interpreter." But when he went to Shuniziah mosque and all the *mashaikhs* including Junaid came round to see him, he talked to them in fluent Arabic to the astonishment of all present.

When he was asked, "What is *fatwat* (manhood, chivalry)," he said, "Let all of us define it." Junaid may Allah be pleased with him said, "*Al fatwato indi tark al-rayatihi wa isqat al-nisbatihi.*" (According to me *fatwat* is not to look at *fatwat* and not to attribute it yourself.) He said, "What the shaikh said is good, but in my opinion *fatwat* is doing justice and not seeking justice." Hearing this Junaid said, "Get up friends, Abu Hafs has surpassed Adam and his posterity."

The story of his conversion is as follows: He fell in love with a maid servant. Having heard that there was a Jew living in the suburbs of Nishapur who knew some charms to win over a girl, he went to him and related his story. He said, "For forty days you will have to give up saying prayers, all remembrance of God or any act of piety to make the charm effective." He followed his advice but the Jew's magic did not work. At this, the Jew said, "You have done some good deed, try to recollect it." Abu Hafs said, "I do not remember anything except that on my way to your place I kicked away a stone lying on the path lest it hurt anyone." The Jew said, "Please go home and do not displease your God whom you have disobeyed for forty long days and who has not let your slightest act of piety go to waste." Accordingly he repented and the Jew embraced Islam.

Abu Hafs took up the profession of a blacksmith till he went to Abiward, met Shaikh Abu Abdullah and became his *murid*. When he came back to Nishapur he saw a blind man reciting the Qur'an in the bazaar. Sitting in his shop, Abu Hafs went on listening to it till he became overwhelmed and lost himself. In this state he put his hand in the fire and took out a red piece of iron without using the prongs, and did not get burnt. When he came to himself, he left the blacksmith trade and never went back to his shop. He said, "I gave up *amal* (deeds) but was forced to take it up again. After that *amal* gave me up and I did not return to it again." When you can give up some work of your free will, it is better to leave it rather than to continue with it. For, it is on account of his

free will (or choice) that man is afflicted. The best thing is to wait for what comes on its own accord from *ghaib* (unseen). As soon as man's will comes into play, its value is lost. So it is better to leave everything to God and refrain from exercising your will (option). For profit or loss is in the hands of God. When you suffer a loss through your action, the power of that action comes from God; when you gain something through your action the source of your power of action is also God. Man has no power whatsoever to avoid loss or gain. Even if a seeker tries for a thousand years to be accepted by God it is quite insignificant compared with a moment of God's acceptance of him. This is because his acceptance has been ordained since eternity. Therefore, man's salvation (*khalas*) lies only in *khulus* (sincerity of purpose). So lucky is he whom the *Musabbib* (Causer, God) has relieved from the cause (*sabab*).

Abu Salih Hamdun

Qidwah-e-Ahli malamat (head of the *malamatiya*), *wa dada ba bala salamat* (contented in affliction), Abu Salih Hamdun bin Ahmad bin Ammarah al-Qassar, may Allah be pleased with him, is one of the ancient dervishes. He was well versed in *Fiqh* (Jurisprudence) and *Hadith* (Tradition) and belonged to the school of Sufyan Thauri in these sciences. He was a *murid* of Shaikh Abu Turab Nakhshabi and through him, of Ali Nasrabadi. He is the author of subtle sayings on various Sufi doctrines. When he became famous for erudition in Islamic science, the divines and dignitaries of Nishapur requested him to mount the pulpit and give lectures, to reform mankind. But he declined the offer saying, "I do not feel inclined to do it." When they asked the reason he said, "Since my heart is still attached to worldly grandeur, my advice will not be effective. In that case the result will be nothing but contempt and ridicule of religion. Only that person is competent to speak whose silence causes harm to religion and speech promotes it." When he was asked, "Why were the words of our predecessors, more effective?" He replied, "This is because they opened their lips for the glory of Islam, the salvation of people and the pleasure of God. While we speak for the glory of *nafs* (lower self), lust for wealth and popularity." He who speaks to solicit God's pleasure and promote truth, is bound to influence the mischief makers; and he whose words are based on selfishness, fails to achieve the objective and cuts a sorry figure.

Mansur bin Ammar

Shaikh-e-ba waqar (Glorious Saint), *Musharraf Khawatir wa 'A'srar* (gifted with secrets and mysteries), Mansur bin Ammar, may Allah be pleased with him, was one of the greatest *mashaikhs*. He ranks as one of the highest saints of Iraq and was popular in Khurasan as well. He was the best speaker and preacher of Islam of his time, being well versed in all the Islamic sciences and branches thereof, both from the point of view of *riwayat* (authenticity) and *darayat* (reasoning).

He is reported to have said, "Praise be to God who has made the souls of the gnostics (*arifin*) the vessel of love, the souls of the ascetics (*zahidin*) vessels of *tawakkal* (trust), the souls of the dependents (*mutawakkilin*) the vessels of peace (*rida*), the souls of the *fuqara* (dervishes), the vessels of contentment (*qinaat*) and the souls of worldly people the vessels of greed. Just as God created hands, feet, eyes, ears, for the sake of holding, walking, seeing and hearing respectively, he created the hearts for various purposes. Some hearts have been made the vessels of cognition (*ma'rifat*), some of infidelity, some of contentment, some of greed and so on. But the most wonderful creation of God is man's soul (*dil*)."

He has also said, "Mankind is of two kinds. Those who have known themselves and those who have known God. The former are engaged in self-mortification and struggle for God; and the latter in service, worship and pleasure of God." That is to say one is a man of *mujahidah* and the other a man of *mushahidah*.

He said, "There are two categories of people. Those who pray to God for everything they need; they are the people who are considered good from the point of view of *shariat*. Secondly, those who do not bother about their needs since God Almighty has created them and made provision for their needs and has fixed the day for their birth and death, good and evil; they are the people who are rich with God and do not worry about anything." This means that the former class of men remember God for their requirements and the latter forget their requirements in remembrance of God. The former are rich with the things they need, but are poor so far as *mushahidah* (God's vision) is concerned while the latter are poor in worldly goods, but rich with God's vision.

Abu Abdullah bin Asim Antaki

Mamduh-e-Auliya (praised by the saints), *Qidwa-e-Ahli Ridha*, (honoured by the people of *Ridha*), Abu Abdullah bin Asim Antaki, may Allah be pleased with him, is one of the greatest leaders of the Sufi community. He was well versed in all the Islamic sciences including their principles (*usul*) and offshoots (*furu'a*). He had the benefit of the company of many elder *mashaikh* by virtue of his long life. He was one of the companions of the followers of the Prophet's companions (known as *Taba Tabi'in*) and a contemporary of Bishr al-Hafi and Sari Saqti. He was a *murid* of Harith al-Muhasibi, and enjoyed the company of Fudhail bin Ayadh, and was popular among the shaikhs of his time. He has left some extremely beautiful sayings on various Sufi subjects.

He said, "*Anfa-ul-faqro ma kunta bihi mutajammelun wa bihi raziun*" (The best *faqr* (dervishhood) is that which beautifies thee and keeps thee happy). This means that while the ordinary people's beauty lies in wealth, a *faqir's* beauty lies in renunciation of wealth and attachment with the wealth Giver. He seeks His pleasure and is satisfied with Him. This is because *faqr* (renunciation) is the negation of wealth and *ghina*

(ownership) is the affirmation of wealth. The *faqir* is contented with God and the *ghani* with himself. Therefore, wealth is a veil (*hijab*), and renunciation is removing that veil (*kashf*). The beauty of both this world and the next is *kashf* and *rida*, and the affliction lies in *hijab*. This explanation also establishes the superiority of *faqr* over riches. God knows best.

Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Khafif

Salik-e-Tariq-e-Waraa wa Taqwa (Pilgrim of Sufism, asceticism and piety) and Yahya the second in renunciation, Abu Muhammad Abdullah bin Khafif is one of the greatest ascetics and the most pious Sufis under all circumstances. He is a good narrator of the Prophet's traditions. He agreed with Sufyan Thauri in the interpretation of *fiqh* (jurisprudence), *shariat* and *haqiqat*, although he could only have the company of his disciples. His sayings on *shariat* and *tariqat* are very subtle.

He said, "*Man arada an yakunhayyan fil hayat fala yaskin al-tamaa fi qalbihi.*" (He who wishes to be really alive during his life time, should not allow greed to find place in his heart). This is because he who is greedy is really dead or a captive of the bonds of selfishness. Therefore, *tamaa* (greed) in heart is like a *tabaa* (imprint, seal) on it and naturally what is sealed is dead. How lucky is the man who is alive with God and dead to everything other than Him. Verily, God alone is the Creator of both glory and degradation. The recollection of God is glory and selfishness is degradation of the soul. As he says, "God created the souls of men as the treasure houses of *dhikr* (remembrance), but they turned them into the treasure houses of lust which can only be washed away by an intensity of fear or an intensity of love. Fear and love are therefore the pillars of *iman* (faith). When the heart is the home of *iman*, the result is love and contentment, not lust and negligence. Therefore, the *mu'min's* (believer's) heart is free from the contamination of greed and lust which are the result of detachment from God. And he who is detached from God does not know what God or *iman* is, for *iman* is the name of attachment to God and detachment from all else."

Abul Qasim al-Junaid bin Muhammad Baghdadi

Shaikhul Mashaikh (Shaikh of Shaikhs) in *tariqat*, and *Imam-ul-Aimma* (elect of the elect of Imams), Abul Qasim al-Junaid bin Muhammad Baghdadi was a popular saint among both the exoteric divines and spiritual shaikhs. He was well versed in theological learning and was a law giver in all the principle (*usul*) and derivative (*furu'at*) sciences; and he enjoyed the status of an *imam* in the Thauri school of Sufi Thought. He was a man of such lofty ideals and high status that he is regarded as *Imam al-Tariqat* among the Sufis of all persuasions and no one has the audacity to disagree with him. He was the *murid* and nephew of Sari Saqti. Once Sari Saqti was asked, "Is it possible for a *murid* to surpass his shaikh in spiritual perfection?" He said, "Yes, Junaid is the living

example." But he said this out of humility, because what he said was the result of spiritual insight by which a man is capable of knowing the spiritual state of persons lower but not higher than himself. So, the fact that Sari Saqti spoke of what he saw, shows that Junaid's status was lower than that of his shaikh. This statement is supported by the fact that Junaid never mounted the pulpit to preach so long as Sari Saqti was alive although his *murids* were clamouring for it.

Once he saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in a dream who said, "O Junaid speak to the people. God Almighty has made thy speech the source of salvation for mankind." When he woke up he thought his status was perhaps higher than that of his shaikh since the Prophet (s.a.w.) had commanded him to preach. But when the day broke Sari sent a messenger to him saying, "You did not preach at the request of your *murids* nor on the recommendation of the shaikhs of the time, or myself. Now that the Prophet (s.a.w.) has commanded you to speak, you should obey him." Hearing this Junaid realised that his status was lower than that of his shaikh because he had come to know his position while he himself was unaware of his position. So, he went to him and tendered apologies. When Junaid asked his shaikh, "How did you know that I saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in the dream?" He said, "I saw the Almighty Himself in a dream who said, 'I have instructed, the Prophet to go to Junaid and tell him to preach so that mankind may be benefited." This and many similar incidents bear testimony to the fact that the shaikhs are aware of the affairs and the inner states of their *murids* in all circumstances.

His sayings are extremely lofty and subtle. He said, "*Kalam al-Anbiya-e-naba anil huzur wa kalam al-siddiqini isharatun anil mushahidah.*" (The words of the Prophet (s.a.w.) are the result of direct presence before God [*huzur*], while those of the *siddiqs* [*auliya*] are based on hints relating to *mushahidah* [visions]). And correct information can only be derived from actual seeing and not from receiving hints. This shows that the end of the *siddiqins*' journey is where the journey of the prophets begin. This also establishes the superiority of the prophets over the *auliya* (saints), as opposed to the two heretical sects who regard *walayat* (sainthood) as superior to prophethood.

Junaid said, "Once I desired to see *Iblis* (devil). I was standing at the door of the mosque when I saw an old man with extremely repulsive looks approaching. When he came closer I said, 'Who are you? I cannot possibly stand your abominable looks.' He said, 'I am the one you wished to see.' I said, 'O wretched creature, why did you refuse to bow before Adam?' He said, 'O Junaid, do you think I should have bowed down to anyone other than God?' I was bewildered to hear this; but soon a voice said, 'Tell him, had you been a true servant of God, you would never have disobeyed Him.' He overheard it and exclaimed, 'O Junaid, by God you have burnt me,' and then he disappeared." This shows how God protects his friends from the mischief of Satan.

It is said that one of his *murids* felt displeased with the shaikh and left him thinking that he (the *murid*) had reached the destination. One day he came back to test the shaikh. Junaid knew what he had in mind. In reply to a question Junaid said, "Do you

want a formal or a spiritual answer?" He said, "I want both." Junaid said, "Had you reached any stage you would not have come to test me. This is the formal answer. The spiritual answer is that I hereby depose you from *walayat* (sainthood)." As soon as he said this, the *murid's* face turned black and he exclaimed, "Sire! I beg your pardon. I have lost the sweetness of *Iman* which I had. Kindly forgive me." Junaid said, "You forgot that the *auliya-Allah* are the custodian of Divine powers and that you would not be able to bear the blows of their displeasure." Accordingly, he breathed over the *murid* and he immediately regained what he had lost and repented his follies.

Abul Hasan Ahmad Khurasani al-Nuri

Shaikhul Mashaikh (Shaikh of Shaikhs) in *tariqat* (Sufism) *Imamul Aimma* (*imam* of *imams*) in *shariat*, Abul Hasan Ahmad bin Muhammad Khurasani al-Nuri may Allah be pleased with him, is famous for good manners, esoteric sayings and intense striving. He had a special way of Sufi technology. A section of Sufis call him "*Nuri*" and follow his leadership.

Sufi Sects

In all there are twelve Sufi sects two of which have gone astray and the remaining ten are on the right path. The latter ten sects are Muhasibiyah, Qassariyah, Taifuriyah, Junaidiyah, Thauriyah, Sahliyah, Hakimiyah, Zarraziyah, Khafifiyah, and Sattariyah all of which are well guided and owe their allegiance to *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* (Orthodox Islam). The two condemned sects are Hululiyah and Hallajiyah. The former believes in reincarnation (like the Christians who claim that God has appeared in the shape of Jesus Christ, and the Hindus who believe that Rama and Krishna were Gods incarnate). The Salimiyah and anthropomorphists also belong to this sect. The Hallajiyah are guilty of abandoning *shariat* and have fallen victim to heresy. The Abahatiyah and Farsiyah also belong to this sect. I am going to deal with these sects in a separate chapter in this book in the proper context. *InshaAllah*, for the benefit of readers.

Abul Hasan Nuri's method of approach is praiseworthy in the sense that he is opposed to leniency and lethargy and stands for perpetual struggle in the way of God. He said, "Once I went to see Junaid who was sitting on his *masnad* (seat of spiritual authority). I said to him, 'O Abul Qasim, you concealed the truth and attained the *masnad*, whereas I disclosed it and was stoned.'" This is because leniency accords with covetousness and strictness brings oppositions. Man is opposed to whatever stands in the way of his ambitions and loves what promotes his baser desires.

Shaikh Abul Hasan Nuri was a *murid* of Sari Saqti and a friend of Junaid. He had had the benefit of the company of a number of *mashaikhs* including Ahmad al-Hawari. He has left behind some of the most beautiful sayings on the subtleties of Sufism and Islamic sciences.

He said, "*Al jama bil Haqi tafarqatun an gharihi wal tafarqato anil ghairi jamaa bihi*" (Attachment with God is detachment from all else and detachment from all else is attachment with God). That is to say he who is courageous enough to detach himself from things other than God, gets attached with God; and he who seeks attachment with God, gets detached from the rest of the world. This is because two opposites cannot unite.

Commentary: Detachment from the world does not mean physical detachment. It is only mental and spiritual detachment which is desirable. Although it is necessary to cut yourself off from worldly engagements temporarily like a student who confines himself to the four walls of boarding house, the spiritual seeker has to take part in worldly affairs partly to gain more strength which is assured through opposition, and to reform mankind and serve it in various capacities. Normally the seeker's return to the world or to himself takes place when he has completed his upward flight and been endowed with the qualities of God in the state of *fana*. The life of descent is in the state of *baqa-bi-Allah* when he is vested with Divine powers to act as the Vicegerent of God on earth. This shows that the ascetic life of the Muslim seeker is only for a limited period the duration of which depends on his capability to reach the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* and come back to *baqa-bi-Allah*.

It is said that once Abul Hasan Nuri stood up at one place in his house and kept on crying and wailing for three days and three nights. Junaid went to him and said, "O Abul Hasan if you think that crying helps you in anyway, tell me so that I too might join you. If not, then keep quiet and be at peace." Hearing this Abdul Hasan became silent and said, "What a good teacher thou art O Abul Qasim."

He is reported to have said, "*Aizzo ashya fi zamanina shayani alimum yoamelo bi ilmihi wa arifun yantiqa an haqiqatihi.*" (There are two things most exalted in our times, an *alim* [man of knowledge] who acts upon his knowledge and an *arif* [gnostic] who speaks out about his spiritual experiences of truth.) This means that knowledge and gnosticism (*ma'rifat*) are two rare gifts of our time, for, knowledge without practice is no knowledge and *ma'rifat* without *haqiqat* is no *ma'rifat*. In fact these two things were not rare only in his time, but are so in all times including our time. It is futile to look for these things nowadays. The best thing is to look after yourself or look into yourself to become *alim* and *arif*. The next thing would be to look for God, when he realises, he sees *ilm* and *irfan* everywhere. It is a sheer waste of time to look for these rarities in the outside world. Find them within yourself and be at rest.

He said, "*Man alima al-ashya bi Allahi fa rajuo hu fi kulli shayin ila Allah.*" (He who knows the things of the world through God, his inclination to things would really be inclination to God). This is because *mulk* (creation) cannot be separated from *Malik*

(Creator). Real happiness lies in attachment with the Creator, not with creation. For if he regards things not as means, but as the end itself, he is bound to suffer. In that case his inclination to things would amount to *shyrk* (polytheism). The best course is to regard them as a means to an end, the end being God Himself. In this way he will find peace in everything.

Abu Uthman Saeed bin Ismail Hiri

He was one of the earliest and most eminent shaikhs of his time, and was respected by all the contemporary saints. In the beginning he lived in the company of Yahya bin Muadh, and then benefited from the company of Shah Shuja Kirmani for a while. He then went with him to see Abu Hafs in Nishapur and lived with him for a long time. Abu Uthman Saeed was reliably reported to have told the following story. "From my childhood I longed to seek the Truth and hated the exoterists; and knew in my heart of hearts that there was definitely some inner reality behind the external form of *shariat*. Ultimately I was able to comprehend it in the company of Yahya bin Muadh Razi. Once I heard about Shah Shuja Kirmani and wished to see him. So I travelled from Ray to Karman, but he would not allow me to stay with him saying that as I had been nursed on the principle of hope (*ridha*) in the society of Yahya, and since one who is brought up in that manner cannot progress in the spiritual journey because optimism breeds lethargy, it would be of no use for me to stay on. But I would not leave his door and went on begging for twenty days till he agreed, and I lived with him for a long time."

"Once he went to see Abu Hafs in Nishapur and I went with him. The day we met the shaikh, Shah Shuja was wearing a royal dress (*qaba*). Seeing this, Abu Hafs rose on his feet and went forward to receive him saying, 'I have found in the *qaba* what I was searching in *aba* (dress of the pious).' I wanted to associate with Abu Hafs but could not do so for fear of Shah Shuja who was an awe-inspiring personality.

"Abu Hafs also knew what my desire was. I went on beseeching the Almighty to fulfil my ambition without hurting Shah Shuja's feelings. When Shah Shuja made up his mind to go back home I also started preparing my luggage although I had a strong desire to stay back. Having read my mind Abu Hafs intervened and said to Shah Shuja, 'Let this young man remain with me, I like him.' Shah Shuja turned to me and said, 'Do what the shaikh wants.' He went away and I remained with the shaikh where I witnessed things which were wonderful and beyond description."

Abu Hafs was a man of mercy. Consequently Abu Uthman Saeed inherited three traits of character from the three shaikhs. Optimism (*ridha*) from Yahya, possessiveness (*ghairat*) from Shah Shuja and mercy (*shafqat*) from Abu Hafs. It is certainly permissible for the seeker to receive spiritual benefits from five, six or even more masters, but decency demands that he should not claim to have reached their spiritual status. On the contrary he should say that he gained what he was destined to gain from his mentors' high

attainments and exalted positions. This is more in accordance with Sufic etiquette because those who really gain perfection do not brag about their high states and status.

Abu Uthman Saeed is the man who introduced *tasawwuf* (Sufism) in Nishapur and Khurasan. He also met Junaid, Ruwaym, Yusuf bin Hussain and Muhammad bin Fadhl-al-Balkhi and received spiritual benefits from them. In truth none of the shaikhs benefited from so many masters as Abu Uthman. The people of Nishapur had set up a pulpit for him to speak to them about Sufism. He is the author of several important books on various Sufi doctrines. He has said, "It is incumbent on the man who has been blessed with gnosis (*ma'rifat*) not to dishonour himself by disobedience to God." In this sense the duty to thank God and refrain from disobedience rests on man. Another interpretation of this saying is that he who is blessed with the inestimable gift of gnosis is never allowed by God to be disgraced by sin. This is because gnosis is the gift of God and whosoever is honoured by a gift of God, can never be disgraced by sin like Adam who once honoured by Divine Knowledge was never disgraced even though he committed an error of judgment.

Commentary: What this passage means is that once a friend of God (*wali-Allah*) is favoured with Divine nearness or union he gets protected and can never be humiliated even if he is guilty of faulty judgment. It may also mean that he who is blessed with Divine nearness does not commit any sin.

Abu Abdullah Ahmad bin Yahya bin Jalal

He ranks as one of the greatest saints of his time and had the fortune of spending time in the company of Junaid, Abul Hasan Nuri and a host of other shaikhs during that period. His way of teaching was perfect and his character praiseworthy. He was famous for his discourses on sublime spiritual truths. He says, "The greatness of the gnostic (*arif*) is to behold God and naught beside Him." This is because the true knower (*arif*) is he who does not see any other than God. When his whole effort is concentrated on *ma'rifat* (gnosis) he is blessed with *ruyat* (vision). For, distractions cause deviation and deviation takes him away from the Lord. He said, "Once I came across a handsome young Christian and got bewildered by his beauty. As I was standing dumb before him, Junaid passed by. I said to him, 'O master, will it please God to burn such a lovely face in hellfire?' Junaid said, 'My dear son, it is the mischief of your lower self (*nafs*) which attracts you to this boy and not your inner sight. If you look through the inner sight, no atom of the universe is less wonderful. So be quick and get rid of it lest you should be punished.'"

Abu Abdullah says, "As soon as Junaid turned his back, I forgot the whole of the Qur'an and went on soliciting God's forgiveness for years till my repentance was accepted and the Qur'an was again revived in my memory. Ever since, I dared not look at anything nor waste my time on things other than God."

Abu Muhammad Ruwaym bin Ahmad

Unique in his time and a wonder of his age was Ruwaym bin Ahmad who was a friend and sharer of Divine secrets with Junaid. In jurisprudence he followed the great jurist, Daud. He was also well versed in the science of exegesis of the Qur'an (*tafsir*) and the art of recitation (*qirat*). Besides his high spiritual attainments, he was a scholar of all the Islamic sciences par excellence. He was famous for his journey in seeking detachment (*tajrid*) from the world and becoming attached (*tafrid*) with God. Towards the end of his life he concealed his spiritual attainments by accepting the high office of *qadhi*. But he was too exalted to remain detached or veiled from God because of his high worldly status. That is why Junaid said, "We who profess detachment from the world are attached to it, while Ruwaym who is seemingly attached to it is detached from it." He is the author of several books, one of which is *Ghalat-al-Wajidin* (Mistake of the Gnostics) which I liked very much.

It is said that once a person came to him and said, "How are you?" He replied, "What can be the condition of a man who is detached from religion, attached to the world, and is neither pious nor good." In this he has tried to narrate the vices of his *nafs* (lower self) because detachment from religion and attachment with world is nothing but the workings of the lower self. It is a pity that the slaves of the *nafs* have identified lust as religion and passion as *shariat*. According to these people, those who agree with them are pious and those who differ from them are heretics. This is a widespread malady of our times. May God save us from it. It appears that Ruwaym, in his statement given above, referred to the conditions of the so-called custodians of faith of his time, or he may have diagnosed the mind of the questioner and replied accordingly, or he may have stated his own condition in a spirit of humility. God knows best.

Commentary: The last alternative seems to be more plausible since those who are closer to God regard themselves as the lowest and worst of all.

Abu Ya'qub Yusuf bin Hussain Razi

He was one of the most wonderful and exalted shaikhs of his time, and was regarded the *Imam* (grandmaster) of the age. He was a *murid* (disciple) of Dhunnun Misri and had a long life to enjoy the benefit of the company of many other masters or *mashaikh* (plural of *shaikh*) as well. He has said, "The meanest of all is the greedy dervish, and the noblest of all is true lover of the Beloved."

Greed is the source of ignominy both in this world and in the hereafter. This is because dervishes are generally hated, and when they are greedy they become more detestable.

Wealth with honour is far better than dervishhood with disgrace. Greed leads one to falsehood as well. Moreover, a greedy lover who loves money more than his Beloved is no longer accepted as a genuine lover and is spurned by the Beloved. When greed is scorned, disgrace turns into honour. So long as Zulaikha coveted Yusuf, she was despised. But as soon as she gave up her desire, God Almighty renewed her youth and beauty. It is but natural that when the lover makes a show of his love, the Beloved withdraws; but when he (the lover) conceals his love and does not exhibit it, the Beloved comes back again. This means that when the lover is greedy he is the loser. So the best course for the lover is to demonstrate moderation and concealment.

Commentary: The Beloved loves to be loved, but hates it when the lover makes a show of his love. Moreover, the Beloved loves the lover, but tries to conceal it. Dagh Dehlvi has beautifully summed up the Beloved's attitude in the following verse:

"What kind of veil is this? The Beloved neither comes out in the open nor goes into total concealment."

Abul Hasan Samnun bin Abdullah Khawas

He is famous for his extreme love for God, and is regarded as a *shaikh* par excellence by his contemporaries. He was rightly called *Samnun-al-Mohib* (Samnun the Lover). But he called himself as *Samnun-al-Kadhdhab* (Samnun the Liar). He was harshly persecuted by Ghulam Khalil, a notorious courtier of the king who pretended to be a pious Sufi, but was the opposite in reality. Like many pretenders of this age he too had sold religion for worldly gains and did the greatest harm to the Sufis. He used to malign the king against the Sufis and had them expelled from court only to make room for himself. However, Samnun was lucky enough to face only one Ghulam Khalil, while in the present age every shaikh has many such charlatans to face. But never mind, the vultures cannot harm the virtuous.

When Samnun became popular in Baghdad, Ghulam Khalil became jealous of him and started to intrigue against him. He sent a beautiful woman to Samnun offering herself in marriage to him, but Samnun flatly refused. She then went to Junaid to prevail on Samnun to marry her. But, he too did not like the idea and turned her out. She went back to Ghulam Khalil with slanderous allegations against Samnun. Ghulam Khalil who was waiting for such an occasion took her to the king, pleading that Samnun be hanged. The king agreed, but when he was to issue orders to the executioner his tongue became paralysed and he could not speak a word. That night he dreamt that if Samnun was killed, he would lose his kingdom. So the next morning, he apologised and set him free.

Samnun is famous for subtle sayings on the doctrine of love. Once on his way back from Hijaz, the people of Fayd asked him to speak on the subject. He mounted the pulpit and started lecturing, but when he found that the people had gone away, he started to address the lamps which started shaking and broke into pieces. He has said, "Every subtle thing is explained by words more subtle than the thing itself. Since there is nothing more subtle than love, how can it be explained?" What he meant was that love is inexplicable. This is because the explanation of a thing is the attribute (*sifat*) of the thing itself. Now since love is the attribute of the Beloved, no words can explain it. God knows best.

Shah Shuja Kirmani

He belonged to a royal family and was one of the greatest shaikhs of his time. He associated with many *mashaikh* of his time, such as Abu Turab Nakhshabi and others. Something about him has been said in the section on Abu Uthman Saeed Hiri. He is famous for his treatise on Sufism and has written a book called *Miratul Hukama* (A Guide for the Philosophers). He has left behind wonderful discourses. He observes:

"A scholar is a scholar so long as he does not know it; when he comes to know it he is no more a scholar. A *wali* is a *wali* as long as he does not know that he is a *wali*; when he knows it he is no longer a *wali*."

What it means is that neither a true scholar nor a *wali* is aware of his scholarship or *walayat*. As soon as they are conscious of their merits they cease to be scholars or *walis*. For, when one says "I am a scholar" or "I am a *wali*", he ceases to be either.

It is recorded in his biography that in order to attain God he did not sleep for forty years. When he finally did go to sleep he was blessed with the vision of God in a dream. So he addressed God saying, "My Lord, I tried to find you in my vigils but found you in sleep." The reply was "O Shah, it is through those vigils that you have found Me. If you had not been vigilant you would not have found Me." Allah knows best.

Umar bin Uthman Makki

He was a prominent shaikh and has written several books on the Sufi doctrine. He became a *murid* of Junaid after enjoying the company of Abu Saeed Kharraz Nabaji. He held the status of an *imam* on the Principles of Theology. He is reported to have said, "No language can describe ecstasy as it is a secret between God and the true believers." What can be described is not a Divine Secret, as Divine Secret is beyond man's power of description.

When Umar reached Asfahan, a youth started associating with him much against the wishes of the boy's father. When the father stopped him from visiting the shaikh, the

youth fell seriously ill. When the shaikh along with his followers went to enquire about the boys' health, he (the boy) requested the shaikh to arrange for a *qawwali* (spiritual singing). Umar asked the *qawwals* (singers) to sing the following verse: "When I fell ill none came to see me, though I visit even your slave when he is ill."

Hearing this the boy got up and sat on the bed, and requested for more. On this, the *qawwal* recited the following verse, "I feel grieved when I neglect you. But when you neglect me I feel more grieved."

Hearing this the boy become completely cured and his father repented and allowed him to associate with the shaikh in whose company and through whose guidance the boy attained the status of a *wali-Allah*. Allah knows best.

Abu Muhammad Suhail bin Abdullah Tustari

He was an eminent shaikh of his time and was greatly admired by all the circles of Muslims. He was famous for his austerity, sincere worship and honest dealings. His sayings on various topics of Sufism are invaluable.

The exoteric scholars are of the opinion that he combined in himself all the virtues of *shariat* and *haqiqat* (exoteric and esoteric values of Islam). But they are wrong in saying so, because *shariat* is *haqiqat* and *haqiqat* is *shariat*, and there is no difference between them. The reason why the exoterics claim this is because what Tustari says is easy to understand. When God allows no division between *shariat* and *haqiqat*, how can a *wali-Allah* (Friend of God) think that they are different? If there were any differences between the two the acceptance of one and rejection of the other would have been possible. But rejection of *shariat* is heresy (*kufr*), and rejection of *haqiqat* is both heresy and polytheism (*shyrk*). When the Sufis talk about *shariat* and *haqiqat* they are trying to project the real significance of *shariat* which is *haqiqat* and not to highlight the difference between the two.

For instance, the Sufis say that the phrase "*La ilaha illallah*", (There is no God but Allah) is *haqiqat*, and the phrase "*Muhammad-dur-Rasulallah*" (Muhammad is the Prophet of Allah) is *shariat*. Now how can you separate the two facts from each other? It is futile to do so. As a matter of fact *shariat* is the outer part of *haqiqat* and *haqiqat* is the inner aspect of *shariat*. It is a pity that the externalists (*zahireen*) deny what they cannot understand. But by their denial of truth they hurt themselves, not anybody else.

Commentary: What the author has said can be explained in this way: *shariat* is the prescription and taking the medicine and thereby regaining health is *haqiqat*. Or we can say: *shariat* is the road, and *haqiqat* is the destination. And destination

is a part of the road, or more precisely speaking, *haqiqat* is the end of the road. So how can the end of the road be separated from the road? The Prophet (s.a.w.) described the relationship between *shariat* and *haqiqat* in the following words:

"*Shariat* embodies my words (*aqwali*), *tariqat* (*Sufism*) my deeds (*af'ali*), *haqiqat* my spiritual experience (*ahwali*), *ma'rifat* my secret (*sirri*)." Consequently, Islam consists of *shariat*, *tariqat*, *haqiqat* and *ma'rifat*. In other words *shariat* is the road (literally the word *shariat* means road), *tariqat* is walking on the road, *haqiqat* is reaching the destination, and *ma'rifat* is the knowledge of Divine mysteries which the seeker gains on reaching the destination. And the destination is God Himself, or *fana-fi-Allah* (Union with God).

The shaikh has said, "Every inhabitant of the earth is ignorant unless he holds God above his body, above his soul and above all his interests in this world and in the next world."

This means that if a man is devoted to serving his worldly interests and ignores God, he is really ignorant, because the knowledge of God can be obtained only when he surrenders himself to God and depends on Him in everything. Allah knows best.

Abu Muhammad Abdullah Muhammad bin Balkhi

He was one of the eminent shaikhs and was very popular in Iraq and Khurasan. He was a *murid* of Ahmad bin Khadhroya and a beloved of Uthman al-Hiri. When he was turned out of Balkh by the enemies of Sufism he went to Samarqand and lived there for good.

He had said, "The best of the gnostics (*arifin*) is one who is the hardest on himself in obeying Divine commands and in following the example (*Sunnah*) of the Prophet." This is because he who is nearest to God is His most obedient servant. And he who is farthest from God is the greatest disobedient.

He has also said, "Some people take the trouble of travelling into deserts and mountains to reach the places where the prophets lived. Why do they not travel into the valleys of the denial of their animal desires and the negation of their lust to purify their heart where their Lord lives."

That is to say the heart (*qalb*) which is the seat of the Almighty is superior to the Ka'bah, which is only the direction to which men turn to worship God. Ka'bah is the place which men look at, but your heart is the place which God looks at. I love to be at the place where my Beloved is, and I love to obey His commands; but the destination of my friends, mentioned above, is where the prophets lived.

Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ali Tirmidhi

He was a scholar of Islamic sciences and a Sufi shaikh par excellence. He was a prolific writer and each work of his is nothing short of a miracle. Some of his works are: *Khatm-ul-Walayat, Kitab-ul-Nahj, Nawadir-ul-Usul, Kitab-ul-Tawhid, Kitab Adhab-al-Qabr* etc. I have a great love for him. My shaikh has said about him, "He is the unique pearl which has no peer in this world."

He is also the author of several books on theology and is an authority on the science of Hadith. He started to write *tafsir* (exegesis) of the Qur'an but could not complete it in his life time. The incomplete book is widely circulated among theologians. He learnt Islamic Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) from a trusted disciple of Imam Abu Hanifah. In Tirmidhi he is known as *Hakim* (Thinker), and his followers are known as *Hakimis*. He is famous for his contacts with Khidhr. His *murid* Abu Bakr Warraq says that Khidhr used to visit him every Sunday and conversed with him on many topics.

As reported by Abu Bakr Warraq, he has said, "He who is ignorant of the etiquettes of slavehood (*ubudiyat*) is more ignorant of the etiquettes of Divinity (*rabubiat*). This is to say he who does not know himself does not know his Lord. This is because the interior (*batin*) depends on the exterior (*zahir*); and refinement of the interior is not possible without refinement of the exterior. He who professes to posses inner wealth without outer perfection (through *shariat*) is a liar. So the attainment of Divine Knowledge (*ma'rifat*) is not possible without perfection in the observance of the laws of *shariat* (*al Zahir*)." This is a very important saying and I will explain it at its proper place, God willing.

Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Umar Warraq

He was one of the greatest shaikhs of his time and was famous for his asceticism (*zuhd*). He had the honour of being blessed with the company of Ahmad Khadhroya and Hakim Tirmidhi. He has written several books on the rules and etiquettes of *tariqat* (Sufism), and is therefore called "Refiner of *Auliya*" (*Moadhib-al-Auliya*).

He related, "Once Hakim Tirmidhi gave me a few chapters of a book to throw in the river but I did not do so. Instead I kept the papers in my house, and went and told him that I had complied with his orders. He said, 'Then what happened?' I said, 'Nothing happened.' On this he said, 'It seems you have not thrown them in the river, go again and throw them in the river.' I exercised self-control and threw the papers in the river. As I did so, there was a breach in the water and a box came out. It swallowed the papers and went down to the bottom. When I went to the shaikh and told him what I had seen, he said, 'Yes, now you have thrown them in the river.' I then requested him to let me know what the secret was. He said, 'After I had written the book I realised that nobody will be able to understand it. Khidhr said, "Give it to me," and God Almighty bade the waters to give it to him.' "

Abu Bakr Warraq says, "There are three categories of men: scholars (*ulama*), rulers (*umara*) and dervishes (*fuqara*). When the *ulama* are corrupt, religion suffers; when the *umara* are corrupt the people suffer; when the dervishes are corrupt, morality suffers."

Now the question is how do these three classes of men get corrupt? The *umara* become so through cruelty to the people, the *ulama* through greed, and the dervishes through hypocrisy. As long as the *umara* remain attached to the *ulama* they do not become dishonest. As long as the *ulama* do not worship the rich they do not go astray, as long as the dervishes refrain from hypocrisy they remain on the straight and narrow path.

The cruelty of the *umara* is due to lack of knowledge; the greed of the *ulama* is due to lack of piety and the hypocrisy of the dervishes is due to lack of trust in God. So the *umara* without knowledge, the *ulama* without piety and the dervishes without trust fall an easy prey to Satan. This means that all the mischief (*fasad*) in the world is due to these three classes of men.

Abu Saeed bin Isa Kharraz

He ranks as one of the greatest Sufi teachers. He is the first to have explicitly discussed the doctrines of *fana* and *baqa*. He is famous for his austerity and subtle sayings. He is the author of splendid books, full of beautiful language and sublime truths. He has benefited from the company of Sufyan Thauri, Bishr Hafi and Sari Saqti. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "By nature men love those who are kind to them." Referring to this Hadith, Kharraz says, "I wonder why a person, who knows that no one is more kind than God, does not turn to God wholeheartedly." This is because real kindness is that which is shown by God Almighty who helps everybody but needs no help from anybody. He who needs help cannot help any one. Now since God is the Lord of the universe and needs no help, the *auliya-Allah* (saints) look upon every favour as His favour, and seek His love and beauty, and turn their backs on everything else.

Abul Hasan Ali bin Muhammad Asfahani

He is also called Ali bin Sahl. He is one of the eminent shaikhs of his time. He exchanged letters with Junaid on some of the most subtle (*latif*) topics of Sufism. His greatness can be judged from the fact that Umar bin Uthman Makki travelled as far as Asfahan to see him. He was a friend of Abu Turab and Junaid. He was famous for his contentment and austerity, and was above being influenced by mischief of any kind.

His sayings on Divine Mysteries and the secrets of creation are extremely subtle. He has said, "The nearness and presence of God (*hadhur*) is superior to belief (*yaqin*) because the former is permanent while the latter is transient." This is because presence comes and never goes, but belief suffers from vagaries, and is unpredictable. Those who are in

the state of presence are in the court, while the people of *yaqin* are out at the gate. The subject of *ghaibat* (absence) and *hadhur* (presence) will be discussed in a separate chapter.

He has also said, "People have been chanting the word '*qalb*' (heart) from the time of Adam and will go on reiterating it till the Day of Judgement, but I have yet to see a person who can define '*qalb*'." What the shaikh means is that what is generally understood by the word *qalb*, is the piece of flesh in the chest which even children and lunatics possess, but in reality they are without it. We hear everybody speaking of *qalb*, but nobody seems to know what it is. If you say it is intelligence (*aql*), it is not. If you say it is *ruh* (spirit), it is not. If you say it is knowledge (*ilm*), it is not. In short, all avenues of Truth are dependent on the *qalb*, but people know only the word and not its reality.

Commentary: The word *qalb* really stands for the human soul (spirit). We all know that man is the combination of body and soul. The body belongs to the earth, while the soul is of Divine origin as indicated by the Almighty in the following ayat of the Qur'an:

"I blew into him (Adam) out of My soul." [15:29]

In another ayat, God says:

"Say to the people: *Ruh* is of the Domain of *Amr*."[17:85]

God has mentioned two domains or worlds in a separate ayat in the Qur'an, the Domain of *Amr* (Divinity) and the Domain of *Khalq* (Creation). The soul of man belongs to the world of Divinity. The word *qalb* is therefore another name of the human soul blown into every child while it is in the mother's womb. It is the Divine light which is at the root of all human activity. It is often likened to a rider whose horse is the body. Having been equipped with the Divine powers of seeing, hearing and judging, the rider is meant to fulfil his destiny by going back to his origin, i.e. to the Domain of Divinity by means of self-purification. But if he succumbs to the base tendencies of his animal self, he falls into the abyss of degradation and is ruined.

Muhammad bin Ismail Khair-un-Nassaj

He was an eminent shaikh famous for his inspired teaching and exalted discourses. He was blessed with a long life. It was he who converted Shibli and Ibrahim Khawas to Sufism and sent the former to Junaid. Khair-un-Nassaj was a *murid* of Sari Saqti and a friend of Junaid and Abul Hasan Nuri. Junaid respected him greatly, while Abu Hamzah Baghdadi loved him very much.

The reason why he is known as Khair-un-Nassaj, is that while going for *hajj*, he reached Kufah where a weaver mistook him for his runaway slave called Khair and forced him to work in his workshop. Thinking that it was God's will, the shaikh did not object to it and kept on serving the weaver for a long time. Whenever the weaver said, "O Khair" the shaikh would promptly say, "Yes Sir," Eventually the man realised his mistake and set him free. After that he went to Makkah and performed *hajj*, and attained a high spiritual status. His status was so high that Junaid used to say, "*Khairun Khairona*" (Our *Khair* is our blessing). He himself liked this title very much saying that, "when a Muslim has named me *Khair* (goodness) why should I change it."

It is related that when the hour of his death came, it was time for the evening prayers. Seeing the angel of death in front he said to him, "Stop for a while, may God bless you. You and I are both servants of God. You have a duty to perform and I also have a duty to perform. Your performance can be delayed, but mine allows no delay. Let me say my prayers, you can then do your duty." He then performed *wudhu* and said his evening prayers and died soon after. The same night somebody saw him in a dream and asked, "How have you been treated by God?" He said, "Do not ask me this question, but now I am in a better place than your world."

He is reported to have said, "Allah expands the breasts of the pious with the light of conviction (*yaqin*), and opens the eyes of the true believers with the light of the secrets of faith." This means piety brings the light of conviction and the hearts get illuminated; while faith opens the inner eyes. Thus, belief (*iman*) and piety (*taqwa*) are interdependent. Allah knows best.

Abu Hamzah Khurasani

He is one of the eminent shaikhs of Khurasan and had the good fortune to be in the company of Abu Turab and Kharraz. He is famous for his unshakeable trust in God (*tawakkal*). Once while traversing a desert he fell into a deep well. After three days he heard a caravan pass by. He wanted to call out for help, but refrained from doing so because he did not like to seek the help of anybody other than God, since it would be construed as a complaint against the Will of God. When the people of the caravan approached the well, they covered it up lest somebody should fall into it. Seeing this the shaikh become certain of his death and started praying to God for help. The same night he saw a huge animal like a dragon which lowered its tail into the well. He took it as a God-sent blessing to save him, and caught hold of it. As soon as he did so, the dragon pulled him out of the well. At that time he heard a voice saying, "O Abu Hamzah we have saved you from death through death itself (the deadly snakes)."

Once he was asked, "Who is a *gharib* (a traveller)?" He said, "He who has no love for the world." What he meant was that when you have no love for the world, you are not

attached to it and when you are not attached to it you have no homeland. And one who has no homeland is a *gharib* (*musafir*). This is a lofty state.

Commentary: The state of homelessness is a lofty state because it is the result of extreme purification of the *nafs* (*tazkiah-e-nafs*) when the seeker gets completely detached from the world and fully attached to God. Once ibn Arabi was sitting in his house when a beggar asked for something. He said, "I possess nothing but this house. Do you want it?" When the beggar said, "Yes," ibn Arabi went out, sat under a tree and the beggar moved in the house.

Abul Abbas Ahmad bin Masruq

He was an eminent shaikh of Khurasan. The saints of Islam are unanimous in saying that he was one of the *autad*, and enjoyed the company of the *Qutub* of the world. When someone asked him, who was the *Qutub* of the world, he did not disclose the name but hinted at Junaid. He is reported to have served the Forty Hidden Saints and received spiritual benefits from them.

Commentary: There is a hidden hierarchy of Muslim saints who perform administrative duties in the world secretly under Allah's Command. They are known as *Rijal-al-Ghaib* or *Auliya-e-Masturin*. The highest of them is called *Ghaus* or *Qutub-al-Aqtab*. He has two deputies called *Qutubs*. One is deputed to perform administrative duties, and the other is in charge of guidance. The lower ranks are divided into several classes known as *Abdal, Autad, Naqiba, Najiba* etc., who have special duties to perform. The number of saints in each class is fixed. When one dies he is replaced by man from the lower ranks.

Ahmad bin Masruq has said, "He who is contented and happy with anything other than God, has his happiness turned into sorrows; and he who loves anyone other than God has his love turned into frustration." This is because whatever is other than God is transient; and he who is contented with the fleeting moments ends up in disappointment. And this is the reason for the prevailing frustration in the world.

Abu Abdullah bin Ahmad Ismail Maghribi

He was a great spiritual teacher and a man of strict discipline. Ibrahim Khawas and Ibrahim Shaybani were his *murids*. His sayings regarding gnosis (*ma'rifat*) are very

subtle, and his arguments are very convincing. He has said, "I have never seen anybody more just than the world which loves you if you love it, and leaves you if you leave it." It means that when you seek the world, you get engrossed in it. If you abandon it, and get attached to God, it can do no harm to you. Therefore, if you leave it you are safe from its mischief.

Commentary: Leaving the world does not mean that you should renounce the world physically and become an ascetic. The renunciation of the Muslim saints is spiritual and not physical. That is to say that worldly pursuits should be regarded as a means to an end, and not an end itself, for the end in Islam is God Himself.

Abu Ali bin Hasan bin Ali Jurjani

He was the greatest shaikh of his time, and was the author of several books on morality and the mischief of worldliness. He was a *murid* of Hakim Ali Tirmidhi, and a friend of Abu Bakr Warraq while Ibrahim Samarqandi was his *murid*.

He has said, "Worldly people are living in a fool's paradise, but they think they are the righteous people following Divine revelations." This is the result of ignorance and arrogance. They, especially the ignorant Sufis, are the slaves of their beastly self (*nafs*) and are the worst creatures on earth, just as the genuine Sufis are the best in the world. The latter are men of Truth without arrogance, while the former are men of arrogance without Truth. They flourish in the realm of ignorance and think they are flourishing in the realm of sainthood (*walayat*). They regard doubt as certainty. They chase shadows and think they are following realities. They speak from covetousness and believe it is Divine revelation. They do so because they are highly conceited. So long as they are in the clutches of conceit they cannot witness Divine Beauty (*Jamal*), nor experience Divine Majesty (*Jalal*). When they do experience His attributes of Beauty and Majesty, arrogance vanishes because they get completely absorbed in God and no trait of selfhood remains.

Abu Muhammad bin Ahmad bin Hussain Jariri

He was a sharer of Divine secrets with Junaid and had been blessed with the company of Sahl as well. He was well versed in all the Islamic sciences especially Jurisprudence (*fiqh*) in which he was regarded as the *Imam* (leader) of the time. He was also fully conversant with theology and had no match in Sufism. It is on this account that Junaid had asked him to teach and train his *murids*. And it is he who succeeded Junaid.

He is reported to have said, "The preservation of *iman* (faith), the success in religion (*adyan*) and physical fitness (*salah-e-afdan*) lies in three things: contentment (*iktifa*),

fear (*itteqa*) and abstinence (*ihtima*). Contentment means having full trust in God, fear means abstaining from things prohibited by God, and abstinence means not eating prohibited food. He who has trust in God becomes pious.

He who fears God becomes religious. And He who abstains from prohibited food keeps healthy. In other words, trust breeds conviction, fear breeds faith and pure food ensures health. Or we can say, he who has trust in God gains in gnosis (*ma'rifat*) and he who fears God improves his character.

As the Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said, "He who prays during the night brightens his face during day." The Prophet has further said, "On the Day of Judgement they will be seated on illuminated pulpits with radiating faces." And he who abstains from prohibited food will find that his body will be immune from disease and his heart from lust.

Abul Abbas Ahmad bin Muhammad bin Sahl Amli

He was one of the most eminent shaikhs of his time, and was respected and loved by all. He ranks as an *imam* in the science of *tafsir* (exegesis) of Qur'an and in the art of recitation (*qirat*) and has explained the subtleties of the Qur'an very competently. He was one of the senior murids of Junaid, and had also met Ibrahim Maristani. Abu Saeed Kharraz had great respect for him and said that no one deserved to be called a Sufi except him.

He has said, "The lust for worldly amusements bars one from the sublimity of Divine nearness." That is to say, that the love of things other than God stands in the way of reaching the realm of Divinity, because it amounts to obeying the dictates of the carnal self (*nafs*). This constitutes a great veil between man and God, while the realm of Divinity is the place of revelation (*kashf*) which can be reached only by negating the demands of the lower self. The desire for all things other than God consists of two vices, love for the world and its attractions, and love for the hereafter and its attractions. Man loves things of this world because his body belongs to it, while his love for the next world is the result of his misunderstanding. Had he understood the next world properly, he would never have been attached to this transient world and would not have been a slave to his desires which is a great obstacle in reaching the heights of Divine nearness. Therefore eternal happiness lies in negating the dictates of the lower self (*nafs*). Someone has beautifully said, "God's bounties in the next world (paradise) are beyond the reach of human imagination."

Abul Mughith Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj

He is a Sufi who was overpowered by Divine love becoming God-intoxicated, possessing tremendous faith and courage. The opinion of the Sufi shaikhs is divided about him.

A section of saints has declared him a heretic (*mardud*) while according to others he is approved (*maqbul*). In the former group are included Umar bin Uthman Makki, Abu Ya'qub Nahrjuri, Abu Ya'qub Aqtaa, Ali bin Sahl Asfahani and others. While the latter group consists of ibn Ata, Muhammad bin Khafif, Abul Qasim Nasrabadi, and all the contemporary saints.

There is yet another section of saints who are silent about him, such as Junaid, Shibli, Hariri and Husri. Some people accuse him of magic and things supernatural. However, the shaikhs of the present age like Abu Saeed Abul Khair, Abul Qasim Gorgani, and Abul Abbas Shaqani consider themselves in accord with Hallaj and hold him in great veneration.

But master Abul Qasim Qushairi says, "If Hallaj was a genuine saint he cannot be called rejected (*mardud*) on the grounds of condemnation by his opponents. On the other hand if he was not genuine he cannot become approved (*maqbul*) by commendation of his friends. Therefore we leave him to God. However, we respect him for the mark of Truth we find in him."

But none except a few of those who condemn him deny his perfection in spirituality, his exalted state and excessive austerity and sacrifices. It would not be honest scholarship to ignore his merits specially when some externalists (exoterists) charge him with heresy, deception and magic. The fact is that his opponents are badly confused. They are mixing two persons of the same name. They mistake Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj for another Hussain who was a heretic from Baghdad, the guide of Muhammad bin Zakariya, and a companion of Abu Saeed the Carmathian (Karamtiya). But this Hussain bin Mansur who is the subject of controversy among the Sufi saints was a native of Baidha in Persia. When the Sufi shaikhs criticise him they do not find any fault with his religious beliefs and dogmas, but they criticise him for his objectionable behaviour as a disciple (*murid*), because first he was a *murid* of Sahl bin Abdullah but left him without permission and associated with Umar bin Uthman Makki. Again he left Umar without permission and went to Junaid who did not accept him. This is the reason why he is criticised by various Sufi shaikhs. It is obvious that when he is criticised he is not criticised for any breach of faith on his part, but merely not observing the etiquette of a *murid* in Sufism. Look at Shibli's remarks about him.

He said: "Hallaj and I had the same religious belief. I was saved by my madness and he was ruined by his intelligence." Had Hallaj's religious beliefs been in question, Shibli would not have said: "We had the same religious belief.." And Muhammad bin Khafif has said: "Hallaj was a religious divine (*alimi rabbani*)." This shows that the Sufi shaikhs disapproved only of his lack of Sufi etiquette, but none of his religious beliefs were in question.

He is the author of several books written in beautiful language with inner spiritual significance on the fundamentals (*usul*) and details (*fara'*) of Islam.

I, Ali bin Uthman, have seen about fifty of his works in Baghdad and its suburbs as well as in Khuzistan, Khurasan and Fars. These books seem to be the writings of a beginner, some are convincing, some are weak, some are easy, and some difficult. The point here is that when a seeker is blessed with revelation, he tries to explain it in the best possible language which becomes more difficult. And when he does it in a state of haste and hesitation, it becomes confusing and incomprehensible for the common reader. And since the language is high his opponents reject it and his admirers accept it, but both are equally ignorant of the real meaning. Thus the rejection on the part of the ignorant turns into acceptance. But when the saints of true perfection and high ranks come across such languages, they do not get involved in the words, at all. They indulge neither in condemnation nor commendation, and refrain from both rejection and acceptance.

It is also wrong to charge Hallaj with magic; although both magic and miracles are possible, indulging in magic is regarded as unlawful in Islam, while miracles are considered as spiritual attainments. While the former incurs God's wrath, the latter wins His pleasure. I am going to speak about miracles in detail in a separate chapter. According to the school of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah*, a true Muslim cannot be a magician. It is a contradiction in terms. As long as Hallaj was in this world, he lived a strictly Islamic life replete with worship, prayers, fasts, *dhikrs*, pious deeds, vigils and so on. On the subject of Monotheism (*tauhid*) too, his sayings are squarely Islamic. Had he been a magician, he would never have possessed the above mentioned merits which certainly qualify him for the status of *walayat* (sainthood) whereas a magician cannot be a *wali* (saint).

It is true some theologians of the Sunni school do blame him for his pantheistic notions such as incarnation (*imtazaj* and *ittehad*), but the objection is due to the selection of words, not the meaning. Moreover, it is not possible in the state of spiritual intoxication to utter appropriate words. Another thing is that it is very difficult for the common people to understand the inner significance of the language of the spiritualists. But it is wrong to deny what cannot be understood. I have seen a section of heretics in the suburbs of Baghdad who are self-styled followers of Hallaj, call themselves Hallajis and try to defend their heresies by producing Hallaj's sayings. They are like the Shias who indulge in exaggeration (*ghulove*) about Hadhrat Ali. I am going to explain this in a separate chapter, *Insha Allahu Taala*.

It must also be understood that what Hallaj said is not worthy of being followed because his spiritual status was that of intoxication (*maghlub*), not of sobriety (*tamkin*), and it is the sober ones who should be emulated. Therefore, although I love him, I do not consider his way to be correct, his state to be ideal and his experiences to be free from error. In my own experiences in the beginning I gained much from his writings about the understanding of supernatural happenings. I have also written a book to elucidate or prove the soundness of his sayings through logic and reason. In another work called, "Minhaj" I have given a full account of his life from the beginning to the end. Apart from what I have said about him in this book it is not possible to follow anything which is based

on a weak footing, as passion and truth can never go together. He often made strange or contradictory statements. For instance he says, "Speaking tongues destroy silent hearts." It means that what is written in books is dangerous and misleading. So how can such sayings be relied upon. However, God knows best.

Abu Ishaq Ibrahim bin Ahmad Khawas

He is famous for his implicit trust in God (*tawakkal*). His status in spirituality was high, and he had been blessed with the company of many *mashaikh*. He is also famous for supernatural deeds and revelations, and is the author of several books on the Sufi doctrines. He has said, "All knowledge is summed up in two things: do not worry about what is destined for you, and do not neglect what has been enjoined upon you." This means that your effort cannot change what you are destined to get, and that you should not waste time on things, other than what you have been commanded by God to do, otherwise you will be punished. Once he was asked what wonders he had seen. He said, "I have seen many wonders, but the most wonderful thing was that Khidhr requested me for my company, but I refused, not because I wanted a better companion, but because I feared I may depend on him and not trust in God. This would have destroyed my *tawakkal*, as it would have amounted to giving up the compulsory for the supererogatory." This is the height of his perfection.

> **Commentary:** For him, trust in God was compulsory (*fardh*) and allowing Khidhr to stay with him was supererogatory (*nafil*) or a voluntary act of piety, so naturally he preferred the former over the latter.

Abu Hamzah Baghdadi Bazzaz

He was one of the greatest Sufi shaikhs versed in scholasticism (*ilmul kalam*). He was a *murid* of Harith Muhasibi, and a friend of Abul Hasan Nuri and Khair-un-Nassaj. He had also benefited from the company of Sari Saqti and many high ranking shaikhs of the times. He was a great scholar in the sciences of exegesis (*tafsir*), recitation (*qirat*), and Hadith, and used to give sermons at the Risafa mosque in Baghdad. He was one of those who were with Nuri at the time of his affliction when God saved them from death. It will be narrated in the section on Nuri's doctrine, God willing.

He has said, "If thou hast saved thyself from thy *nafs* (lower self) thou hast done justice to thyself. If mankind is safe from thy hands, thou hast done justice to them." This means that you have two duties to perform, the first is to yourself and second to others. When you refrain from sins to better your position in the hereafter, you are supposed to have done your duty to yourself. And when you save mankind from the mischief of

your lower self (*nafs*), you are considered to have done your duty to mankind. See that both you and others are not subjected to the mischief of your egotistical self. After that, busy yourself in fulfilling the obligations imposed by God on you. God knows best.

Abu Bakr Muhammad bin Musa Wasiti

He was a scholar par excellence in all fields of Islamic learning, and was famous for his knowledge of Divine secrets (*haqaiq*), and enjoyed a high spiritual status. He was one of the earlier associates of Junaid and was admired by all the saints of the time. His sayings are too sublime to be understood by the exoterics. He did not stay for any length of time at any one place, but when he reached Merv, the people loved him for his sincerity of purpose, and listened to his lectures with admiration. And so he made that his permanent abode. He is reported to have said, "Some of those who remember God are more heedless (*ghafil*) than those who do not remember Him."

What it means is that he who recites the name of God like a parrot, but is not conscious of God in his heart is worse and more heedless than he who is conscious of God in his heart but does not recite His name with his tongue.

In other words, it is better if you do not recite His name but are conscious of His presence, than reciting His name and not being conscious of His presence. This means that your arrogance in reciting His name is worse than not reciting His name verbally in a state of humility. To be precise, your reciting God's name without His presence is worse than enjoying His presence without reciting His name.

Commentary: What the shaikh said has two meanings: inner and outer (esoteric and exoteric). The outer significance is that if at the time of reciting God's name your mind wanders about and is not fixed on Him, it is worse than keeping your attention fixed on God without reciting His name. The inner significance is he who has reached the state of *fana-fi-Allah* (union with God) and does not recite His name, is superior to the one who is not blessed with the status of *fana-fi-Allah* but is constantly engaged in reciting His name. What happens at the higher stages of spiritual progress, is that one gets so much absorbed or intoxicated in God that one is unable to utter a word or recite His name. Once a shaikh, who was a friend of the saint Haji Imdadullah Muhajir Makki was lying on his death bed. But when his relatives pressed him to recite God's name at the hour of leaving the world, he would turn his face away. As this is a sign of faithlessness, Haji Imdadullah was called in. When he said to the dying shaikh, "Why do you not recite God's name?" He replied, "These people force me to utter the name whereas I am absorbed in the Named." Similarly Abu Yazid Bistami said, "When someone utters God's name there are times when I feel like striking at his head. But there are also times when I feel

like putting sugar in the mouth of one who utters His Name." So the main thing is nearness, presence and union with God. When you reach that stage your tongue is silenced. That is why the Sufi masters have said, "He who knows God becomes silent." But there are others who say, "He who knows God, his tongue grows longer (speaks too much)." This saying does not contradict the previous one. But it is the outcome of a still higher stage called *baqa-bi-Allah* (abiding or subsisting by God) which is really a return of the pilgrim to himself again after having been attributed with Divine Attributes in the state of *fana-fi-Allah*, to be able to function as God's vicegerent (*khalifa*) on earth. It is to this stage that the Prophet (s.a.w.) refers when he says:

"Allah says when a servant of mine wishes to draw near unto Me I love him and get so close to him that I become his eyes, ears, hands, feet and he sees by Me, hears by Me, works by Me and walks by Me, and I give him what he desires."

Abu Bakr bin Dulaf Shibli

He was an eminent shaikh of his time endowed with a very high status and an enviable position. The sayings of Shibli are extremely subtle. That is why one of the shaikhs has said, "There are three wonders of the world: the symbols (*isharat*) of Shibli, the subtleties (*nukat*) of Murtaish and the allegories (*hikayat*) of Ja'far."

Shibli ranks as one of the greatest Sufi teachers and spiritual masters. Originally he was a courtier of the King, but he was converted to the path of Sufism by Khair-un-Nassaj. However, he was a *murid* of Junaid, and associated with many others as well. He interprets the following ayat of al-Qur'an:

"Tell the believers to lower their eyes ....." [24:30],

by saying, "This means, close the physical eyes against seeing what is prohibited, and the spiritual eye against seeing what is other than God."

And it is due to heedlessness (*ghaflat*) that one looks at unlawful things and gets involved with what is other than God. The greatest misfortune of the heedless is that they are ignorant of their own faults. And he who is ignorant in this world will also be ignorant in the next world as said by God in the Qur'an,

"He who is blind in this world will be blind in the next world." [17:72]

In fact unless God does not remove the unbridled desires from man's heart, he cannot refrain from seeing what is prohibited; and unless God creates His love in man's heart, he cannot refrain from seeing what is other than God.

It is said that once when Shibli went into the *bazaar* (market) people started shouting, "He is mad (*majnun*)." He said, "Yes I am mad according to you, and you are sober according to me. May God increase my madness and your sobriety."

What he meant was that his madness was due to intensity of love and their sobriety was due to their ignorance. So he prayed to God to increase his madness to get closer and closer to God, and to increase their sobriety to be farther and farther from God. He said this because he was shocked to see that the people had no awareness in distinguishing love from madness and this world from the next.

Abu Muhammad bin Ja'far bin Nasiruddin Khuldi

He is one of the earlier companions of Junaid, and other senior *mashaikh*, and is famous for recording biographies of the saints, and preserving and explaining their sayings. His own sayings are splendid. He has quoted appropriate stories of the Sufi masters to illustrate the vices of the baser self (*nafs*) of man. He is reported to have said, "Trust (*tawakkal*) is when you are perfectly contented, whether you have anything or not." This means that you are not worried about your daily bread, and so do not feel happy when you get it or feel distressed when you don't. This is because your body is the property of God and it is He who knows better than you, whether to preserve it or destroy it. You need not interfere in His domain and leave the kingdom to the King.

Abu Muhammad Ja'far says, "Once I went to Junaid and found him suffering from fever. I said, 'O master, ask God to cure you.' His reply was, 'Last night I prayed to Him, but I heard a voice saying, "Your body is our property. We keep it well or ill; it is our concern; who are you to interfere in our affairs? Learn manners and keep quiet."' " God knows best.

Abu Ali Rodbari

He belonged to a royal family and ranks as one of the greatest and most powerful shaikhs. He was well versed in Islamic learning and was the author of many books and subtle sayings, and was known for his miracles. He has said, "A *murid* is he who desires for himself what God desires for him, while a *murad* is he who does not desire anything in the universe except God."

Commentary: The terms *murid* and *murad* have special significance in Sufi terminology. According to the Sufi masters a *murid* is he who loves and seeks God. And a *murad* is he who is loved and sought by God. In other words the former is a lover and the latter beloved of God. While the lovers are many, the beloveds are very few in the world of Islam. Since to be a beloved of the Almighty is really the

greatest honour. In the Muslim *ummah* Shaikh Abdul Qadir Jilani and Khawaja Nizamuddin Auliya of Delhi are considered to belong to the latter category. The former is called "*Mahbub-i-Subhani*", while the latter is known as "*Mahbub-i-Ilahi.*" The terms *murid* and *murad* owe their origin to the following ayat of Qur'an, "Allah invites the one whom He loves and guides the one who seeks Him."

This means that the *murid* is satisfied with God's will, because a lover has no desire of his own, and desires what God desires for him. And the *murad* is he who is loved by God, and does not desire anything except God. Therefore, to be satisfied with God's will (*raza* or *ridha*) is the beginning of the stations (*maqamat*), while to be loved is the culmination (called *ahwal* or ecstasy). The former is the stage of slavehood (*ubudiyat* or descent), while the latter is the stage of Divinity (*rabubiat* or ascent, union). Thus the *murid* subsists by himself, while the *murad* subsists by God. God knows best.

Commentary: The words *'ahwal'* and *'maqamat'* used here need explanation. *Ahwal* is the plural of *hal* which means transient or fluctuating ecstasy or God-intoxication, while *maqamat* is the plural of *maqam* which means a permanent station or stage of sobriety. What the author here means is that while the *murad* (beloved) is fully absorbed in God, the *murid* (lover) is always seeking the Divine Beloved and is constantly passing through different stages of the spiritual journey.

Abul Abbas Qasim bin Mahdi Sayyari

He was one of the *imams* of the time and was rich with the treasures of both exoteric and esoteric learning. He benefited from the company of Abu Bakr Wasiti and many other *mashaikh*. He was the most prominent (*azhar*) and the most celebrated (*ashraf*) of the *mashaikh*, and the most obedient (*azhad*) in his love for God (*ulfat*). He was the author of several books and splendid sayings. He is reported to have said: "Unification (*tauhid*) is when you think of nothing except God (*Haq*)."

This means that you should neither think of anything other than God nor of your personal affairs, because when you think of anything else, you establish the existence of things other than God, and when the existence of anything other than God is established, the oneness of God (*tauhid*) is nullified.

Commentary: This explanation of the shaikh's saying by Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri affirms the doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* (Oneness of Being) according to which nothing exists in the universe except God. What exists is God and the things of the

universe are nothing but shadows (*zil*) of the Real or different manifestations of the One, like the waves, bubbles and icebergs in the ocean, which are water in reality; or like the cups, jars and vessels made of earth which are earth in reality. The doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* is based on the Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and has been upheld by all the *auliya-Allah* (saints of God) of the *ummah*. It goes to the credit of ibn-al-Arabi who expounded it in details with relevant support from the Qur'an and Hadith. It has also been affirmed by the author, Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri in this book at several places. As space does not permit the elaboration of the doctrine of *Wahdat-al-Wujud* here, we will content ourselves to state it briefly.

We all know and believe that God's Being is limitless. If anybody says God's Being is limited, he goes astray. Now if we say that the universe is not included in God's Being and has a separate existence, then we put a limit on God's unlimited Being. A God who is everywhere but not in the universe is not limitless. And to say that God's Being is limited is heresy (*kufr*).

Moreover, since God is the Author and Creator of the universe, creation cannot be regarded as something separate from the Creator. Since the universe is the expression or manifestation of God's power of creation, it cannot exist apart from God, but is included in God's limitless Being.

You may say that when everything is included in God's Being why is idol worship prohibited in Islam? The answer is that to worship an idol is as ridiculous as regarding John's hand as John and begging his hand to take money out of his pocket when John refuses to give it to you. John's hand is not John, but is not separate from John either. A part cannot be given the status of the whole, nor can a part, for instance John's hand, possibly be considered to possess all the powers and faculties of John, like knowledge, wisdom and his other attributes. For instance, John can think, see, hear but his hand cannot. Similarly a small piece of clay called an idol which is included in God's Being, like the little finger of John, cannot possibly possess all the powers and Attributes of the Almighty. Nor can any person like Christ, Rama, Krishna or Buddha who are erroneously worshipped, possess all the vast and unlimited powers of God Almighty, and be worthy of worship simply because John's little finger can, by no stretch of imagination, ever possess all the powers and wisdom of John and be be regarded as John.

This is in a nutshell the doctrine of *Wahdat-ul-Wujud* or the conception of God in Islam which is in sharp contradiction to the childish theory of God sitting on the Throne somewhere in the upper regions, as cherished by a few ultra exoteric scholars like ibn Taimiyya, who created agitation in the *ummah* and who was consequently jailed for life.

Abul Abbas Qasim

He belonged to a learned influential family of Merv, and inherited plenty of wealth from his father, but gave it away in return for two *hairs* of the Prophet (s.a.w.). In view of this sacrifice God bestowed upon him huge treasures of spiritual wealth through his discipleship of Abu Bakr Wasiti and made him the *imam* (leader) of the saints. He left a will saying that after his death the hairs of the Prophet (s.a.w.) be placed in his mouth. It is due to the blessings (*barakah*) of these hairs that whosoever visits his grave and prays for something is granted his wish by God's grace.

Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Khafif

He was one of the greatest saints of his time and was regarded as *imam* in all the Islamic sciences. He was famous for his austerity and insightful explanation of spiritual truths (*haqaiq*). He met Shibli, Hussain bin Mansur and Jariri, and also benefited from the company of Ya'qub Naharjuri. He was a great traveller. Although he belonged to the royal family, God granted his prayer of repentance and he gave away all of his belongings. He was held in high esteem and honour by all the saints of his time.

He is reported to have said: "Unification (*tauhid*) means turning your back on the dictates of your lower self (*nafs*)." This is because the lower self is unaware of the bounties of God and unless you oppose it, you cannot attain union with Him. As soon as you spurn the dictates of the lower self you reach the state of union with Him. God knows best.

Abu Uthman Saeed bin Sallam Maghribi

He was one of the saints well known for sobriety (*tamkin*) and was well versed in Islamic learning. He is also well known for his asceticism (*riadhat*), discipline (*siasat*) and knowledge of the ups and downs of the spiritual path and for his miraculous powers.

He is reported to have said: "He who avoids the company of the saints and joins the company of the rich, God makes him die a spiritual death." This is because by sitting with the rich, one is influenced by their greed and becomes greedy, and greed kills the soul. God knows best.

Abul Qasim Ibrahim bin Mahmud Nasrabadi

He was the king of the domain of spirituality in Nishapur where emperor Khwarzam Shah was the king of the domain of mortality. He was famous for his subtle sayings and

supernatural deeds. He was a *murid* of Shaikh Shibli and a master of the saints of Khurasan. There was none greater than him in knowledge and piety.

He has said: "You are between two relationships: a relation with Adam and a relation with God. The relationship with Adam forces you to fall an easy prey to lust, leading to calamities and errors which are the tendencies of your human nature (*bashriyat*), as said by God in the following ayat:

'Verily man is unjust and ignorant.' [33:72]

And your relationship with God enables you to enter the realms of revelations, miracles, purity and sainthood which are the fruits of your obedience to God as said by Him in the following ayat of the Qur'an:

'Those who are obedient to God walk on the earth with humility.' [25:63]."

The relationship with Adam (*bashriyat*) ends on the Day of Judgment, while the relationship with God is eternal. The best attitude in the state of *bashriyat* (relationship with Adam) is to say, "O God, I have been cruel to myself, forgive me." And the best position in your relationship with God has been defined by Him in the following verse:

"O my servant you need not fear this day." [43:68]

Abul Hasan Ali bin Ibrahim Husri

He was one of the most influential shaikhs and was regarded as the *imam* of his time. In the dignity of his writings and the beauty of his speech he had no match. He has said:

"Leave me to my fate. Are you not the sons of Adam whom God made with His hands, and breathed into him of His soul and commanded the angels to bow down to him. After that God commanded him to do something but he disobeyed. When man's beginning is like this what can his end be."

This means that when man is left to himself he becomes disobedience personified. But when he is blessed with God's favours he becomes love personified. Now compare your ugliness with the beauty of God's favours to you and then live accordingly.

This is in brief the account of the Sufi shaikhs who are regarded as *imams* (leaders) of the *mashaikh*. Had I given detailed accounts of their life and sayings this book would have swelled into a huge volume, and my objective of being succinct would have been lost. Now I proceed to give some account of the Sufis of the modern times.

CHAPTER TWELVE

About the Sufis of Modern Times

You must know (may God bless you), that in our times, there are some people who cannot live the life of hardship and austerity of the past saints. They seek Divine nearness without working for it. When they talk about the excellence of previous *mashaikh* and do not find the same merit in themselves, they say, "We cannot be like them. It is not possible in this age." They are wrong in saying so, because God has never let this world be without a proof (*hujjat*) and the Muslim *ummah* will never be without saints in it. As the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"There will always be in my *ummah*, forty persons on the pattern of Prophet Ibrahim."

Some of the persons to be mentioned in this chapter have passed away, and some are still alive. May God bless them and bless us by His Grace.

Abul Abbas Ahmad bin Muhammad Qassab

He had the honour of knowing and deriving benefit from some of the senior saints of Transoxania, and was famous for his lofty status, miraculous powers, sainthood and an ascetic life. Abu Abdullah Khayyat who is regarded as the *imam* of Tabaristan has said:

"One of God's bounties (*afdhal*) is that He has enabled a person not properly educated, to answer our question about the most difficult and abstruse spiritual topics with perfect ease. And this is Abul Abbas Qassab."

Although he was not literate, his sayings with regard to the science of Sufism are extremely sublime as well as interesting. He was as great in the beginning as he was in the end. I remember many stories about him, but will relate only one for the sake of brevity.

Once a boy with a heavily loaded camel was passing through the muddy streets of Amul, when the camel slipped and broke its leg. At this the boy started crying and wailing. The shaikh was very upset by the boy's condition, and raising his head he implored God saying: "O my Lord kindly set the camel's leg right or I shall die of grief." He had hardly finished his prayer when the camel got up and started walking.

He is reported to have said: "We have to develop the habit of being contented with God's will, whether we like it or not. If we don't we are bound to suffer. When we are satisfied with what He wills our grief turns into happiness. But when we grudge it, we are all the more grieved, because what God wills cannot be avoided, and if we are not satisfied with it, our grief is redoubled." God knows best.

Abu Ali Daqqaq

He ranked as the *Imam* of his time and had no match in the science of *tasawwuf*. He is well known for his clarity of expression and beauty of language in his explanation of Divine mysteries. He had met several Sufi shaikhs and had spiritually benefited from them. He was a murid of Nasrabadi and used to preach. He has said:

"He who loves what is besides God weakens his spirituality; and he who talks of what is other than God is a liar."

This is because love of what is other than God is due to lack of knowledge of God; and love of God breeds in your heart a hatred of everything else. So when you talk of anything you hate, you are a liar.

> **Commentary:** This may also mean that he who speaks of what is other than God is a liar because nothing exists besides God and when he talks of anything non-existent he is a liar.

I heard an old man saying: "Once I went to Daqqaq to ask him what *tawakkal* (Trust) was. When I met him, he was wearing a nice turban which I wanted to possess. When I said, 'O Master, what is *tawakkal*?' He replied promptly, *'Tawakkal* is that you do not covet anybody's turban,' and saying this he threw his turban before me."

Abul Hasan Ali bin Ahmad Kharqani

He was one of the eminent shaikhs and was admired by all the saints of his time. Shaikh Abu Saeed had met him and talked to him about all the topics of high spiritual importance. When he was about to go back home, Shaikh Abul Hasan Kharqani conferred his *khalafat* (deputyship) on him.

I have heard Hasan Moaddib, the servant of Abu Saeed, saying that when Abu Saeed reached the Shaikh's audience he did not speak a word except to give short replies to his questions. When Hasan asked why he was so brief in the Shaikh's audience. He said, "One person is enough to start a discussion." I have heard Master Abul Qasim Qushairi saying, "When I went to Kharqan I lost all my eloquence and power of speech due to the Shaikh's dignity and grace; and I thought I had been deprived of my sainthood."

Abul Hasan Kharqani said, "The paths to God are two, one of which is right and the other is wrong. The wrong path is man's misconception that he can reach God by his own effort and the right path is God's kindness to him. Therefore, he who says 'I reached God (by my effort)' has not reached and he who says 'God has enabled me to reach Him' has reached." This is because he who claims to have gained God's nearness has not gained it. On the contrary he who does not claim it has gained it.

Commentary: This passage can be interpreted in two ways. One is that it is wrong to say that you can gain God's nearness by your efforts. It is He who really guides mankind to Himself. The second interpretation which is more subtle is that God Almighty is omnipotent and limitless so that it is beyond human capacity to comprehend Him in totality. Therefore he who claims to have comprehended Him is wrong, as no human being can comprehend Him. But he who says, as a matter of humility, that he has not comprehended Him has infact comprehended Him to some extent. This statement is akin to one of the sayings of Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq, the Prophet's first successor who said, "Confession of one's inability to comprehend God is comprehension." God knows best.

Abu Abdullah Muhammad bin Ali Daghistani

He lived in Bistam and was one of the greatest saints of God and was well versed in all Islamic sciences. He is famous for his fine and subtle sayings some of which I came to know from Shaikh Sahlagi who was his spiritual successor. These are extremely lofty and subtle. He said, "Oneness of God is established by you when you are no more yourself."

The lowest degree of attainment of *tauhid*, is that you surrender your will to the Will of God Almighty.

Commentary: *Tauhid* here means reaching the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* when Oneness of Being called *wahdat-ul-wujud* is fully established and the seeker or the pilgrim loses himself in the vast ocean of Divinity like a drop in the sea.

Shaikh Sahlagi has stated that once Bistam was so completely swarmed by locusts that all the trees and crops became black. When the people started shouting to scare the locusts away, the Shaikh asked them what the matter was. When he was told that the people were distressed by the locusts, he went on top of the house and looked up towards heaven. The moment he did so the swarm started dispersing and by the time of the afternoon prayer there was not a single insect left and not a blade of grass was damaged. God knows best.

Abu Saeed Fadhlullah bin Muhammad Mihni

He was a Sultan of his time and an Ornament of the Spiritual World. All the shaikhs of his time were enamoured by him. Some through their spiritual perception, some through their respect for his spiritual attainments and some because of his spiritual influence. He was a versatile genius par excellence, and a grand personality famous for reading people's minds. Besides this, he had tremendous miraculous powers whose effects are noticeable even today.

In his early days he left Mihna for Sarkhas for studies. He joined the school of Abu Ali Zahid where he learnt three days' lessons in one day and would devote himself to worship for the remaining two days. At that time, Shaikh Abul Fadhl Hasan was the saint (*wali*) of the area. Once Abu Saeed met Shaikh Abul Fadhl on the bank of the river Sarkhas. He said to him," O Abu Saeed the way you are following is not the right one. Follow the right way." So he got attached to the shaikh and went back to his place and became fully engrossed in the austerity of worship and devotion till God Almighty opened the doors of His guidance for him and enabled him to reach a high status in spirituality.

I heard Shaikh Abu Muslim Farisi saying: "I had always been on unfriendly terms with Abu Saeed. Once when I went to see him I was clad in a patched cloak (*muraqqah*), and I found him sitting on a fine couch wearing costly Egyptian silk. I said to myself this man claims to be a *darwish* [dervish] despite all these luxuries, and I claim to be a *darwish* (*faqir*) by virtue of my detachment from everything. How can I agree with such a man? He read my mind and raising his head said; 'In which book have you read that he who is perpetually engrossed in Divine contemplation (*mushahidah*) is a *darwish* (literally poor)?' What he meant was that he who is blessed with the treasures of Divine union cannot be called a *darwish* (poor). He is rich with God. The *darwishes* (poor) are those who are still struggling for union. Hearing this I was ashamed of myself and asked for forgiveness."

Shaikh Abu Saeed is also reported to have said:

"*Tasawwuf* (Sufism) is the name of direct vision of God."

This refers to *mushahidah* (contemplation) which is the result of intense love for Divine Beauty, and detachment from human attributes and subsistence in God. This will be discussed in detail in the Chapter on *Hajj*.

Commentary: The English scholars always translate the word *mushahidah* as contemplation which does not seem to be an exact substitute. In Urdu literature the word *mushahidah* connotes actual seeing with the eyes. But according to Sufi terminology the word *mushahidah* means seeing with the **inner** eyes. It is almost the same as the spiritual experience of *fana-fi-Allah*. But contemplation seems to fall far short from it.

Once Shaikh Abu Saeed was going from Nishapur to Tus with a dervish when they entered the mountainous region. It was so cold that his feet were benumbed. The dervish wanted to tear his waist coat to wrap it round the Shaikh's feet, but desisted from doing so thinking that the waist coat was too costly. When they reached Tus the dervish said, "Sir what is the difference between whispering of the Devil (*waswas*) and Divine revelation (*ilham*)". The Shaikh said, "It was Divine revelation when you thought of tearing your coat to warm my feet and it was the satanic whisper which prevented you from doing so." There are many stories like this which we leave out for the sake of brevity. God knows best.

Abul Fadhl Muhammad bin Hasan Khuttali

He is my Shaikh in *tariqat* (Sufism) and is a great scholar in *tafsir* (exegesis) and Tradition (Hadith). In Sufism he belonged to the Junaidi school of thought. He was a *murid* of Husri, a friend of Sarwani, and a contemporary of Abu Umar Kazwini and Abul Hasan bin Salibah. For sixty years he lived a pious life of retirement in the mountains, mostly of mount Lugam.

He had a long life full of miracles (*brahin*) but never wore the Sufi dress nor adopted the Sufi formalities and was very strict with the ostentatious Sufis. I have never seen a Shaikh so awe-inspiring in my life. He has said, "The worldly life for us is just one day and we are fasting on that one day." What he meant was that although this life was short, even then he abstained from its fascinations, since he knew its snares and deceptions.

Once when I was pouring water on his hands as he was performing ablutions (*wudhu*) a thought came to my mind. "When everything is predestined why should free people

be enslaved by Sufi masters simply for the sake of miracles." He said, "O my son, I know what you are thinking about. Know that whatever is predestined occurs through a cause (*sabab*). When God wishes to crown the son of a poor watchman and bestows upon him the spiritual kingdom, He gives him the power to repent and to reach the company of a *wali* (saint), so that by this means he gains the power of working miracles."

I have heard many things like this from him. At the time of death he was in Bait-al-Jin, a village in a valley between Damascus and river Baniyan. As he was breathing his last, his head was resting on my lap and my heart was grieved by the rude behaviour of a friend of mine. Reading my mind he said, "O my son, I tell you one thing regarding faith; if you act upon it you will never suffer from affliction. Know that God is the Creator of good and evil. So whatever befalls you, take it from Him and do not oppose it. If you do this then you will never be aggrieved." This the last thing I heard from him. God knows best.

Abul Qasim bin Hawazan Qushairi

He was a wonder of his age, blessed with an extremely high spiritual status. He was held in great esteem by the contemporary *mashaikh* for his multifarious merits. He is the author of fine books and subtle sayings. And God Almighty saved him from anthropomorphic beliefs and notions.

Commentary: The theory of anthropomorphism believes that God has a body and a figure like man. This belief being un-Islamic, is strongly opposed by the Sufis, though the philosophers uphold it.

He is reported to have said, "Sufism is like the disease of *Birsam* which begins with hysteria and ends in silence. But when it reaches perfection it makes you dumb." This means Sufism has two stages. The first is marked by ostentation (*namud*) and the second by ecstasy (*wajd*). Ostentation means showing off and talking about miracles. Ecstasy is the state of the finalists (*muntahiyan*) and is characterised by silence because in ecstasy you cannot utter a word. In the beginning the seeker talks a lot in the fury of love, but when he reaches the Truth he calms down; like Prophet Musa (a.s.) who said in his initial stages:

"O Lord, show me that I may behold Thee." [7:143]

This looked like intoxication. But since our Prophet (s.a.w.) was in the final stages called *tamkin* (sobriety) he said:

"I am unable to praise Thee....."

This is the highest state and greatest status.

Commentary: The question of intoxication (*hal*) and sobriety (*maqam*) has been discussed at various places in this book. It is stated here again briefly. In the beginning the seeker is overwhelmed by ecstasy and gets intoxicated in God. This stage is called *talwin*, or *fana*. But when he gets stronger he finally overpowers his ecstasy and regains his identity. This stage is called *tamkin* or *baqa-bi-Allah*, and is a characteristic of the Muslim mystic, whereas according to the mystics of other religions *fana* is the last and final stage. That is why the Hindu, Christian and Buddhist mystics permanently reside in solitude while the Muslim mystics come back to resume worldly duties after a short period of training and become active members of society.

Abul Abbas Ahmad bin Muhammad Ashqani

He was an *imam* in all the branches of Islamic learning including fundamental belief (*usul*) and derived sciences (*furu'a*). He enjoyed the benefits of association with many shaikhs of his time and reached spiritual perfection. Consequently, he ranks as one of the greatest and most eminent Sufis. He was an exponent of the concept of *fana*, and spoke in ambiguous words. I have seen some ignorant Sufis who attach superficial meanings to his sayings, but do not know the real significance thereof. I loved him very much and he was very kind to me. He was also my teacher in certain sciences. I have never seen any shaikh more strict in the observance of *shariat* (Muslim law) than he. He was completely detached from everything belonging to the world. And his language was so sublime that only the *imams* could understand it. He would often say:

"I want non-existence (*adam*) and wish no return from it."

In the Persian language he would say: "Nobody can be what he wants to be. I also am not what I wish to be. What I wish is that God takes me to such a realm of non-existence (*adam*) that I can never regain my existence."

This is because whatever state or station man reaches, he is still veiled, for the states and stations are nothing but veils and curtains between man and God. Therefore he who desires to achieve these stages invites the veils to come in between. Non-existence or the desire of meeting the Beloved is better than existence under veils. When Allah Almighty is the Being which knows no non-being, what is the harm to His Kingdom if I get non-existent? What he said is due to his total *fana* in God's Being.God knows best.

Commentary: The topic of *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah* has been discussed several times in this book and requires no further elucidation. What we can say about this shaikh is that he belonged to the school of Abu Yazid Bistami who was

an exponent of the concept of *fana* as opposed to the school of *baqa* as expounded by Junaid. Our author has expressed himself in favour of the latter doctrine. i.e. *baqa-bi-Allah* which is decidedly higher than *fana-fi-Allah*. But over and above *fana* and *baqa* is the stage of *jamiyyat* in which both *fana* and *baqa* coexist. In other words the pilgrim of this stage enjoys both *fana* and *baqa* simultaneously. That is to say he is united and separated at one and the same time, and enjoys the pleasures of union and the pangs of separation simultaneously. This is the highest status in spirituality and is the speciality of the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself. It is also called *abdiyat*.

Abul Qasim bin Ali bin Abdullah Gorgani

May Allah prolong his life for the benefit of all Muslims! He is an eminent Shaikh, unique and matchless. From the very beginning his spiritual states were exalted and unfaltering. He traversed hard and tedious paths on his journey and thus won the hearts of everybody, specially the seekers of spirituality (*talibin*). He is well known for his perfection in all the Islamic sciences as well as in reading minds and knowing their spiritual states, so that each *murid* is now an ornament of the area he lives in. One of them is Abu Ali Abul Fadhl bin Muhammad Farmadi who will, by the Grace of God, be one of the great *imams* (*muqtada*) of his time. He has left no stone unturned to serve his Shaikh and has thus become his mouthpiece.

Once when I was sitting with the shaikh (Gorgani), I started relating to him my spiritual experiences and visions of early youth in anticipation of his comments as he was a great critic (*naqqad*). He listened to me in great humility and respect. Since I was young and arrogant I thought he was respectful towards me because he had not been blessed with such experiences in his youth. He read my mind and said, "O my son, my humility is not due to your experiences and visions, but it is due to the bounties of God Almighty who bestows these favours upon his servants."

Hearing this I was perplexed. Seeing my worry he said, "Do not worry; it does happen that in the beginning, the novices are proud of what they see and experience; even if they are deprived of their spiritual gifts they go on talking about their achievements. This is due to arrogance. Whether you achieve success or fail, arrogance does not leave you. The remedy is that one should never be arrogant over what he gets and should regard himself as the humblest slave of God who is the real Giver and Bestower of everything." Later on I exchanged many sublime experiences with him which I do not relate for the sake of being brief.

Abu Ahmad al-Muzaffar bin Ahmad bin Hamdan

He sat on the throne of the spiritual kingdom God Almighty had bestowed upon him and was crowned with His bounties. He is famous for his discourses on *fana* and *baqa*. His Eminence Shaikh Abu Saeed has said: "I have been ushered into Divine audience through servantship (*bandagi*), while Shaikh Hamdan got there through lordship." That is to say the former got *mushahidah* (vision) through *mujahidah* (austerity), while the latter went through *mujahidah* after *mushahidah*.

I heard him saying, "What the others achieved through treading over deserts and mountains, I got sitting on the throne of Kingship." Some fools attribute this saying of his to arrogance, but it is not arrogance to state the facts, especially when the facts are stated by saints. Nowadays his successor is Khawaja Ahmad.

Once, when I was sitting with the Shaikh (Abu Ahmad Hamdan) a pretender from Nishapur said, "*fana* is followed by *baqa*." The Shaikh said (only to outwit him) "How can *fana* be followed by *baqa*? *Fana* means non-existence while *baqa* is existence. Both contradict each other. Everybody knows that *fana* is nothingness. If it becomes something it is not *fana*. It is something else. It is a fact that Essence (*Dhat*) does not get extinguished (*fana*). However, attributes can be extinguished. When attributes are extinguished the Essence persists. It is wrong to say that Essence gets extinguished."

I do not remember his exact words, but I have said what he really meant. I will now explain what the shaikh was arriving at, so that everybody understands it. You must know that man's will (*ikhtiyar*) is his own attribute (*sifat*), which is veiled by God's Will. This shows that man's attribute is a veil between God and himself. Now because man's will is transient (*fani*) and God's will is lasting (*azli*) when man's will is merged in God's will, his will is not operative any more. God knows best.

Commentary: What the above discussion means is that so long as the seeker's attribute of his being is in existence, he cannot be said to have reached the stage of *fana*. He reaches the stage of *fana* only when he loses his being in God's Being. That is to say he exists no more, for what exists is God. This is what happened to Hallaj when his being merged with that of God's Being. At that moment he was heard to have said, "*Ana'l Haq*." It was not Hallaj who said "*Ana'l Haq*" but God who spoke through him. But he was however accused of heresy because the ignorant thought it was Hallaj who said this.

Once when I went to see him, he said "What do you want?" I said, "I want to hear music (*samaa'*)." So he sent for singers. As they started singing I was deeply overwhelmed by ecstasy as is the habit of the novices. When the singing came to an end he asked me,

"What was it like?" When I replied that I enjoyed it very much. He said, "A time will come when this music will be no more pleasant to you than the crowing of a raven. This is because the desire for music is there so long as you are far from vision (*mushahidah*). When you reach the stage of *mushahidah*, music loses its charm. You should try not to let this craving for music become a habit. If it becomes a habit you will not be able to rise to higher stages." God knows best.

Commentary: Our author has rightly said: "God knows best", because what Shaikh Hamdan said is correct from the point of view of *fana,* which was his stage, at which the seeker is not there to be able to listen to music. But in the state of *baqa*, the craving for music is all the more irresistible. That is why Hadhrat Syed Ali Hujweri, who had finally reached the stage of *Baqa-bi-Allah*, has devoted a long chapter in this book to the merits of spiritual music called *samaa'* or *qawwali.*

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Contemporary Sufis

If I go on giving the life accounts of all the Sufi shaikhs, this book is bound to swell to disproportionate dimensions. If I leave some of them and mention a few the purpose of the book will not be fulfilled. Therefore, I have decided to mention them briefly and mostly those who are known for their knowledge of Divine mysteries and secrets (*Haqaiq wa Maarif*).

The Shaikhs of Syria and Iraq

SHAIKH ZAKI BIN AL-GALA. He is one of the greatest and the most respected shaikhs of the present times whom I have met. He was fire personified as far as love of God is concerned and was known for his supernatural deeds.

SHAIKH ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD BIN AL-MISBAH SAIDALANI. He is one of the senior shaikhs known for his masterly description of Divine secrets. He belonged to the Hallajiya school of Sufism. He is the writer of several books which I had the good luck of reading with him.

SHAIKH ABUL QASIM SADSI. He was a mountain of courage in the pursuit of spiritual truths (*haqaiq*) and a great lover of Sufi shaikhs.

The Shaikhs of Fars

SHAIKH ABUL HASAN BIN SALIBAH. He is famous for his profound knowledge of Divine secrets particularly *tauhid* (*wahdat-ul-wujud* or Unity of Being).

Shaikh Abu Ishaq Shahryar. He ranks as one of the greatest Sufi shaikhs and is the principal guide of the area.

Shaikh Abul Hasan Ali bin Bakran. He was a Sufi shaikh of high status.

Shaikh Abu Muslim Harvi. He was a shaikh of great popularity.

Shaikh Abul Fatah Salaba. He was a true successor of his illustrious father so far as spiritual attainments are concerned.

Shaikh Abu Talib. He was known for his love for Divine mysteries (*ma'rif*).

Out of these shaikhs I have lived in the company of only *Shaikh ul Shayukh* (Shaikh of Shaikhs) Abu Ishaq.

The Shaikhs of Kohistan, Azerbaijan, and Tabaristan

Shaikh Shafiq Farah called *Akhi Zanjani* was known for his piety and charming manners. His sayings on Divine secrets are well known.

Shaikh Badhshah Taib was the man who knew the ups and downs of the Sufi path by heart.

Shaikh Abdullah Junaidi was a very kind-hearted saint loved by all.

Shaikh Abu Tahir Makshoof was one of the greatest saints of his time.

Khawaja Hasan Samnani was known for his intense love for God.

Shaikh Sahlagi was one of the greatest *mutawakkilin* (trusting in God) who lived without visible means of livelihood.

Shaikh Ahmad bin Abul Hasan Kharqani was a true successor of his celebrated father.

Shaikh Adib Kamandi was one of the eminent shaikhs of his time.

The Shaikhs of Karman

Khawaja Ali bin Hussain Sarkani was a great traveller who seldom stayed at home. His son Hakim was also a great shaikh.

Shaikh Muhammad bin Salamah ranks among the great shaikhs of his time.

Besides them there have been numerous hidden shaikhs and youngsters promising to be good shaikhs in that area.

Shaikhs of Khurasan, the Blessed Land

SHAIKH MUJTAHID ABU'L ABBAS DAMGHANI ranks among the most successful Sufi guides of his time.

KHAWAJA ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD BIN ALI JUWANI was a great *mahaqqiq* (gnostic).

KHAWAJA ABU JA'FAR TARSHIZI was one of the eminent shaikhs of his time.

KHAWAJA MAHMUD NISHAPURI was a universal teacher known for revealing Divine mysteries.

SHAIKH MUHAMMAD MA'SHOOQ lived a life of ease and comfort and was a great optimist.

KHAWAJA RASHID MUZAFFAR BIN ABU SAEED is a budding Sufi who promises to inherit his celebrated father's merits.

KHAWAJA AHMAD HAMMADI SARKHASI was known for his hard struggle in the Sufi path. I have lived with him for some time. His *kashf* and *karamat* (supernatural deeds) are well known. A great saint indeed!

SHAIKH AHMAD NAJJAR SAMARQANDI was the greatest shaikh of his time. He lived at Merv.

SHAIKH ABUL HASAN ALI BIN ABU ALI ASWAD was a true successor of his father's spiritual achievements and had no match in piety nor sincerity of purpose and had a will of iron.

Since it is very difficult to mention all the saints of Khurasan, I cannot give an exhaustive list of them. It would suffice to say that I have personally met three hundred such shaikhs, of whom only one would be enough for the whole world, thanks to the stars of Khurasan which are in ascendence in the realm of love and spirituality.

The Shaikhs of Transoxus Countries

SHAIKH ABU JA'FAR MUHAMMAD BIN HUSSAIN AL-HARAMI was the *Imam* (leader) of his time and was loved by all. He was known for his intense love for the Divine Beloved and was, therefore, very fond of *samaa'* (devotional singing).

KHAWAJA ABU MUHAMMAD BALGHARI was a *faqih* (jurist) of his time and was held in great honour and esteem among his people. He led a prosperous life and was known for his praiseworthy dealings with mankind.

Shaikh Ahmad Ilaqi was the shaikh of his time and was known for his renunciation of formalities and customs.

Khawaja Arif was a great shaikh unparalleled in the country.

Shaikh Ali bin Abu Ishaq was one of the most venerated and honoured saints of his time and was eloquent in describing Divine mysteries.

These are the saints whom I have met and known their spiritual heights. I regard all of them as *muhaqqiqs* (gnostics).

The Shaikhs of Ghazna

Shaikh Abul Fadhl al-Asadi was a great *arif* (gnostic) and was known for his *karamat* (supernatural deeds). His way of life was concealment (of spiritual gifts).

Shaikh Ismail Shashi was known for his renunciation of the world (*tajrid*) and self renunciation (*tafrid*). His way of living (*maslak*) was that of self reproach (*malamatiya*).

Commentary: *Tajrid* and *tafrid* are regarded as the highest stages in Sufism. *Tajrid* stands for renunciation of everything other than God. *Tafrid* is the stage when the great shaikhs, having completed their missions and entrusted the task of guidance to their disciples, again plunge themselves into the depths of Divine Essence and become one with the One, leaving no trace of duality, to the extent of giving up even eating and drinking for a few years or a few months before death. Although *fana* is always followed by *baqa*, *tafrid* is *fana* after *baqa*, which is very rare in the Sufi path.

Shaikh Salar Tabari combined in himself the merits of a great scholar of Islamic sciences and a great spiritual saint. He lived a life of ease and happiness, but was well versed in Divine Truths and Secrets.

Shaikh Abu Abdullah bin al-Hakim known as *al-Murid* was always God-intoxicated and had no parallel among the shaikhs. His way of living was concealment so that one was able to know his greatness, not by looking at him but by living with him.

Shaikh Saeed bin Abu Saeed al-Ayyar was *Hafizul Hadith* (remembrance of the Prophet's sayings by heart). He lived a long life and enjoyed the company of many *mashaikh*. He was a man of strong *hal* (*fana*) and was a great *arif* (gnostic). But he preferred the way of concealment and hated ostentation.

Shaikh Abul 'Ala Abdur Rahim bin Ahmad as-Saadi was an eminent Shaikh held in great honour and esteem. He lived a life of ease and comfort and his *hal* was very strong. He was well versed in all the Islamic sciences.

Shaikh Auhad Qaswarah bin Muhammad Jarwizi has great love for the Sufis and venerates all of them. He had the benefit of the company of a great many shaikhs.

I am confident that from among the divines and commoners springs a person fully capable of turning some of the vulgarities of this city into refinement and replacing the ugly elements by the saints and elite.

Now I turn to the subject of controversies among the various Sufi sects.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Difference of Opinion among Sufi Orders

It has already been stated in the section on Shaikh Abul Hasan Nuri that there are twelve sects (orders) of the Sufis of which two are perfidious and ten are genuine. And everyone of that ten genuine sects has excellent (*latif*) systems and methods of purification (*mujahidah*) and illumination (*mushahidah*).

Commentary: The word excellent used by the author in respect of all the ten genuine sects of the Sufis bears testimony to the fact that the differences among the Sufis are of a healthy and constructive nature and there is no hostility or conflict involved anywhere. It may also be stated here that the word *mujahidah* is translated as 'purgation' by western writers including Dr. Nicholson's translation of this book, which however is taken in a different sense in the Muslim world. The word *mujahidah* is derived from "*jahada*" or *jihad* which etymologically means struggle or a holy war against perfidy and heresy. Among the Sufis the word *mujahidah* is used to express the struggle or the war against one's beastly self in conformity with one of the sayings (*Hadith*) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), who on returning from warfare said, "We have returned from the lesser war (*jihad al asghar*) to the greater war (*jihad al akbar*). When asked what he meant by *jihad al akbar*, he said, "The war against *nafs* (the beastly self)." Similarly the Arabic word *mushahidah* is translated by the western writers as "contemplation" which is not a correct substitute. Contemplation is also similar to meditation. But *mushahidah* is something superior to contemplation and meditation. It means actual vision of Divine Beauty and perceiving Divine Truth with the spiritual eyes, whereas meditation

and contemplation are merely ideas or having one's attention fixed or concentrated on the Divine Lord, which is called *dhikr* or remembrance of God in Sufism.

Although they are divided on the ways and means of purification, they are unanimous on the principles and details of *shariat* and *tauhid*. Says Shaikh Abu Yazid Bistami, "Difference of opinion among the *ulama* is a blessing (in disguise), except on *tajrid-ul-tauhid*." This is based on the Hadith of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.).

Commentary: Now we have to see what *tajrid-ul-tauhid* means. Dr. Nicholson has translated it as "detachment (*tajrid*) of unification (*tauhid*)" which does not mean anything. The Urdu translators, have translated the words *tajrid-ul-tauhid* into *tauhid-e-khalis* or pure *tauhid*. But the real significance is something else. It relates to the actual experience of the states of *tafrid* and *tajrid* already explained earlier. These terms are almost synonymous and stand for total annihilation (*fana*) of the seeker in the Divine Being, so that the sense of *fana* also disappears and *fana-al-fana* (annihilation of annihilation) takes place; and what remains is the Absolute Essence which cannot be conceived or comprehended by human intellect or expressed by human language. It is something beyond human intelligence and therefore above comments or controversy. Hence there is no difference of opinion about it. Shaikh Abu Yazid is therefore right in saying that the difference of opinion among the divines is a blessing except on *tajrid-ul-tauhid* at which state is beyond human comprehension and beyond discussion.

This doctrine of *tauhid* (Unity) is indisputable among the *mashaikh* from the view point of *haqiqat* (reality) and disputable from the point of view of *majaz* (externality).

Commentary: The terms *haqiqat* and *majaz* require some explanation. Since man is a combination of the body and soul, he belongs to both the realm of Divinity and to this physical world of ours simultaneously. The spiritual aspect of his life is known as *haqiqat* and the physical aspect as *majaz*. It is through the hard struggle of purification that the spiritual seeker passes from the domain of physicality or phenomenality called *majaz* into that of *haqiqat* (reality). So what the author means is that the externalists may have different opinions on the subject of *tauhid* because they cannot understand, but there is no difference of opinion among the *mashaikh* whose knowledge of *tauhid* is based on personal experiences called *haq-ul-yaqin* while knowledge of the exoteric scholars is based on *ilm-ul-yaqin* which is not free from doubt.

Therefore I am going to deal with the subject from the point of view of '*majaz*' and explain the difference of opinion between the various sections of Sufis at some length, so that the seekers are able to gain knowledge, the disputants (*ulama*) gain weapons for discussion (*salah*), the *murids* (disciples) gain guidance, the lovers gain salvation (*falah*), the intellectuals get a warning and I myself gain blessings of both this world and the next.

Section

The Muhasibi School of Thought

The Muhasibis are named after their Shaikh Ali Abdullah bin Asad Muhasibi who is recognised by the consensus of *mashaikh* as "*Maqbul-lun-Nafs*" (approved by God) and " *Maqtul*" (killed by the sword of love). He combined in himself the virtue of an exoteric theologian and an esoteric divine. He was well versed in fundamentals as well as in the details of all the Islamic sciences. He was very eloquent on the subject of *tauhid* both from the points of view of *haqiqat* and *majaz*. His chief peculiarity is that he regards, *ridha* (pleasure or satisfaction) as a state (*hal*) and not as a station (*maqam*).

Commentary: *Hal* is a sort of rapture of transitory nature. It comes and goes; whereas *maqam* is of a permanent nature. When it comes, it comes to stay. In other words when *hal* continues to persist it is called *maqam*. So according to the Muhasibi school, *ridha* (satisfaction) does not assume a permanent nature and therefore cannot become *maqam* (permanent station).

He is the first Sufi who made this subtle observations which gained currency in Khurasan. But the *mashaikh* of Iraq hold the opposite view and regard *ridha* as a *maqam* and not *hal*, and call it *tawakkal* (trust in God). Since this controversy still persists, I am going to elaborate on it for the benefit of the reader, by the Grace of the Almighty.

What is *Ridha*?

I will first mention various kinds of *ridha* which I hope, will make the understanding easy. I will then explain the difference between *hal* and *maqam*.

Know that *ridha* is a well established doctrine validated by both the Holy Qur'an and *Sunnah* (practices) of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). Says the Holy Qur'an:

"The true believers (*mu'minin*) are pleased with God." [5:122]

It is also said in the Holy Book:

"Verily, Allah is pleased with true believers" [48:18]

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"He who is satisfied with God gets real taste of *iman*."

Ridha is of two kinds. *Ridha* (pleasure) of Allah with His servant, and *ridha* of the servant with (the decree) Allah. God's pleasure with the servant is manifest in His bounties and gifts both material and spiritual; and the servant's pleasure with God is the name of his obedience to God's commands and submission to His Will. Actually man's pleasure is the result of God's pleasure, since, unless God is kind to him he cannot be obedient to God. *Ridha* on the part of man is really his determination to accept God's decree irrespective of whether it is favourable or unfavourable, and whether it is in the shape of fire of God's wrath (*jalal*) or it is illuminated by the rays of His Beauty (*jamal*). Being burnt or illuminated does not make any difference to him because both spring from God Almighty and whatever comes from the Beloved is welcome.

Once Imam Hasan bin Ali (r.a.) was asked to comment upon the following statement of Abu Dharr Ghaffari who was one of the famous Companions of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.): "To me poverty is dearer than wealth, and sickness dearer than health."

The Imam said: "May Allah have mercy on Abu Dharr. So far as I am concerned I would say, he who has experienced the blessings of Allah, will go about his affairs and would never will anything other than Allah's Will."

This means that when Allah's servant experiences the benefits of Allah's choice for himself and stops exercising his own choice, he gets rid of all maladies. But mind you, this attitude is not possible for the seeker at the stage of separation (*ghaibat*). It can be adopted only at the stage of union (*hadhur*) with God, because the shaikhs have said: "*Ridha* removes sorrows and cures negligence." It banishes the thought of any other than God from the hearts and cuts across the shackles of hardships. Therefore, *ridha* can be exercised only by the man who believes that the author of good and evil is the Almighty and that He has an eye on him in all circumstances.

Men at the stage of *ridha* are divided into the following four categories:

1. Those who are satisfied (*radhi*) with spiritual gifts (*ata*). This is *ma'rifat* (gnosis).

2. Those who are satisfied with material gifts (*nu'ma*). This is worldliness.

3. Those who are satisfied with misfortunes (*bala*). This is affliction.

4. Those who are satisfied with *istifa* (nearness). This is love.

So he who respects the gifts because of the Giver (*mu'ti*) is happy and when he is content, he gets rid of all troubles. He who respects the Giver because of the gifts gets enmeshed in worldliness and adopts *ridha* as a formality. This lands him in all sorts of troubles. And real *ma'rifat* is that which leads him to the union (*mushahidah*) with the Divine Being. But if *ma'rifat* does not lead him to *mushahidah*, it is not *ma'rifat* (gnosis). It is exteriority or alienism which is torturous, and the gifts become a veil between him and God. [Translator's Note: The original is so beautiful. It says: "*Ata* (gifts) becomes *ihita* (veil)."]

He is satisfied with God because He gives him *dunya* (wealth). Therefore, he is ruined because that is not friendship (to be happy when the friend gives and to be angry when he does not give). That kind of *ridha* is not *ridha*. It is disappointment (privation).

Love for worldliness is not real love, for even the whole world is not worthy of one's love, nor should its absence cause worry. A gift is a gift only when it leads you to the Giver. If it stands between you and God, it is no more a gift. It is misfortune.

As regards the third category i.e. those who are satisfied with affliction (*bala*) they are the people who find pleasure in pain and can bear it cheerfully by the strength of *mushahidah* (vision of Divine Beauty), because pain is no pain when it is accompanied by the pleasure of the vision of Divine Beauty.

As regards those who are satisfied with Him on account of *istifa* (Divine attraction), they are true lovers of God and their love is affected neither by pain nor pleasure. Their abodes are nothing but the realm of Pure Essence (*tanzih*), and their reaches are nothing but the gardens of love and intimacy.

They are at once present with, and absent from, God. They adorn both this physical and the spiritual world simultaneously. They have terrestrial bodies in celestial abodes. They are the people who in the intensity of devotion turn their backs to everything other than God, free themselves from the limitations of 'states' and 'stations', escape from the inconsequential and get themselves fully attached to the Divine Beloved in the hope of Divine Grace and Divine Beauty. Says Allah in the Holy Qur'an in praise of these people:

"They are not concerned with profit or loss, nor do they care for life or death, nor worry about the hereafter." [25:3]

Thus their *ridha* is free from profit and loss, since he who is pleased with the decrees of God lives in peace and bliss. Says the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.):

"He, who is not satisfied with God, has a worried soul and a troubled body."

Section

Sayings about *Ridha*

A tradition says that once Prophet Musa (Moses) (a.s.) said, " O my Lord tell me the way by which I can please Thee." God said, " O Musa it is beyond Thy capacity." Hearing this he fell in *sajada* (prostration) before the Almighty in absolute humility, whereupon the Almighty said to him: "Verily, My *ridha* lies in thy *ridha* with My *qadha* (decrees)." This means that man's satisfaction with God's decree is the surest sign of God's satisfaction with him.

Bishr Hafi asked Fudhail, (may Allah be pleased with them) "Which is higher, *zuhd* (asceticism) or *ridha* (satisfaction)?" Fudhail said, "*Ridha* is higher than *zuhd* because he who is *radhi* (satisfied) does not aspire for a higher stage." This means that the stage of *ridha* is above the stage of *zuhd*, but there is no stage above *ridha*. In other words the palace is superior to the gate. This statement confirms the view point of Muhasibi who maintains that *ridha* is one of the states (*ahwal*) and not stations (*maqamat*). It is bestowed by God and not acquired by effort. However, the possibility of a desire after *ridha* cannot be ruled out, since the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said in a prayer, "I seek Thy *ridha* after Thy *qadha* (decree)." That is to say "Give me the power to be satisfied with Thy decree when it comes to pass." This shows that *ridha* cannot precede *qadha*, since it is the *intention to be satisfied* and not *satisfaction* itself. And intention to be satisfied is not satisfaction.

Abul Abbas bin Ata said, "*Ridha* is the seeker's determination to accept cheerfully what is decreed for him." That is to say whatever happens to him, he should regard it as his destiny and be pleased with it.

Harith Muhasibi said, "*Ridha* is peace of mind (*sukun-i-qalb*) with the decree of God." This is in accordance with his earlier stand, since peace of mind is a gift of God and cannot be acquired through effort. This also shows that *ridha* is a state not station.

It is said that Shaikh Utba al-Ghulam did not sleep the whole night and went on saying, "If you burn me in hellfire I am your lover, and if you have mercy on me I am your lover." This means that both affliction and mercy affect the body, but love is in the heart which is not affected by affliction or mercy. There is no contradiction in this assertion which confirms Muhasibi's point of view to the effect that *ridha* is the result of love, and that the lover is contented with what the Beloved does. He can be veiled from God either by affliction or by mercy, since he subordinates his will to the will of the Beloved.

Shaikh Uthman Hiri has said, "For the last forty years I have never been dissatisfied with anything which has happened to me, nor have I disliked any state in which God has placed me." This also confirms the lasting nature of *ridha* and the height of devotion.

It is said that once a dervish fell into a river. Someone shouted from outside, "Should I bring someone to rescue you?" He said, "No." The man said, "Do you wish to die?" He said, "No." The man asked, "What do you wish?" He said, "I wish what God wishes. I have nothing to do with wishing."

The *mashaikh* have dealt with the question of *ridha* in varying terms, but the difference is only verbal not real.

Section

Difference Between *Hal* and *Maqam*

Now I am going to state the difference between *hal* (state) and *maqam* (station). But first I will define them so that the reader can understand them easily. It may be mentioned that since these two terms have been in vogue from the very beginning, and all the Sufi writers have said one thing or another about them, it is necessary for the reader to know their significance.

Know that philologically the word *muqam* means the 'stand' (viewpoint) taken by the seeker, and the word *maqam* means the place where he stands. But in the Arabic language the word *maqam* means both the standpoint (views) of the seeker as well as the place where he stands. However, in Sufi terminology *maqam* means to be firmly established along the path towards attaining the state of perfection. So the first *maqam* (step) in this path is *taubah* (repentance), the second is *anabat* (acceptance or forgiveness by God), the third is *zuhd* (devotion) and the forth is *tawakkal* (trust in God). The word *maqam* has been mentioned in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an,

"There is no one without a *maqam*." [37:164]

Hal (state) is a state of a intense rapture (*kaiffiyat*) from God which comes and takes hold of the seeker and can neither be driven away nor retained by effort.

Maqam (station), on the other hand is a thing which can be achieved by effort. In other words *maqam* is acquirable (*iktasabi*) whereas *hal* is unacquirable (*wahbi*). It is a gift from God which comes without effort. *Maqam* is the result of deeds (*amal*) while *hal* is the result of God's grace (*afzal*). Therefore, the Sufi of the position of *maqam* is said to be standing on his own legs, while the Sufi of the position of *hal* surrenders his self into nonentity (*fana*) and subsists by Divine Mercy. The *mashaikh* of Islam differ on the question of the duration of *hal* and *maqam*. Some of them regard *hal* as permanent, while others think it is transitory. Harith Muhasibi maintains that *hal* is permanent and regards love (*muhabbat*), fondness (*shauq*), spiritual contraction (*qabdh*) and expansion (*bast*) as *ahwal* (plural of *hal*). He argues that if *hal* is fleeting, the lover

remains no longer a lover, and the faithful no longer a faithful. That is the reason why he thinks *ridha* (satisfaction) is a *hal*. The above mentioned saying of Abu Uthman confirms this viewpoint.

There is, however, another category of shaikhs who do not regard *hal* as a permanent state. Junaid voices this opinion when he says:

"*Hals* are fleeting like lightning, but if anything persists it is the creation of one's own imagination."

Some of the shaikhs have expressed the transitory nature of *hal* in the following words:

"*Hal* is a thing of the nature of *halul* (evaporation) which vanishes as soon as it comes."

When it persists it assumes the name of *sifat* (attribute); and since a *sifat* remains as long as the *mausuf* (one who has that attribute) lives, the transitory nature of *hal* stands proven. I have tried to bring out the difference between *hal* and *maqam* because these terms are frequently mentioned in the books of the *mashaikh* of Islam and the readers should be in a position to understand them.

In brief, *ridha* (satisfaction) constitutes one of the final stages of the spiritual journey. It is the beginning of *ahwal*. It is here that *wahbi* (grace) and *iktisab* (effort) unite. That is to say, the seeker should make an effort and also look for God's grace simultaneously.

Commentary: This shows that the allegations of inactivity or inertia levied against the Sufis by the so called progressives are wrong and baseless because they do not sit idle and wait for Divine Grace. They have to work to achieve the stage of *maqam*, and depend on Divine Grace for the achievement of *hal*. As soon as they cross the limits of self effort they are attracted by Divine Grace and pulled up into the domain of Divine Presence.

There is no stage higher than *ridha* in Sufism. It is here that all efforts come to an end and Divine Grace begins. Therefore those who regard *ridha* as *maqam*, do so because they had put in some effort in the beginning to achieve it. But when they eventually witness God's Grace, they regard *ridha* as *hal*. This is Harith Muhasibi's conception of *ridha* in which he differed from some of his contemporaries. But so far as the rest of the doctrines of Sufism are concerned he is unanimous with them. However, he warned his followers to refrain from such utterances or deeds which, though correct in principle, may lead simple people astray. For instance, once Abu Hamzah, who was his *murid*, came to see him. The shaikh had a huge cockerel which used to crow in an appealing way. As it crowed, Abu Hamzah who was a lover of *samaa'* (devotional music) uttered a cry and went into *hal* (ecstasy). The shaikh picked up a knife and wanted to kill the

bird saying, "Abu Hamzah! You have committed an act of heresy. Recite the *Kalimah* and be a Muslim again." The rest of his *murids* intervened and requested the shaikh to forgive him, saying that they thought Abu Hamzah was one of the great Friends of God and above all a monotheist (*muwahhid*), and that there was no reason why he should be chastised. The shaikh said, "I have no complaint against him, nor do I see in him anything but good deeds outwardly and strict monotheism inwardly. The only thing to which I objected was his imitation of the practices of the incarnationists (*Halulian*). Now it is in the nature of a cock to crow. Why should its sound be considered to be the voice of God, when God Almighty is indivisible and infinite and cannot be contained by finite beings like the birds or statues. The lovers of God should go into ecstasy at God's voice rather than at the sounds of birds." Abu Hamzah saw through the subtlety of the shaikh's statement and said, "O my shaikh, although in principle there was nothing wrong in my action, I do repent it and wish to be excused as I acted like the incarnationists." In short, warnings of this kind abound in Muhasibi discourses, which are not recorded here for the sake of brevity.

Commentary: *Halul* (incarnation) and *ittihad* (combination) like the Christian doctrine of incarnation of God in Jesus Christ and the Hindu belief regarding Rama and Krishna as the embodiments of God, are considered heretical in Islam and therefore the Muslim saints are against them. The reader must have realised, how strongly the saints of Islam are against the cults of *halul* and *ittihad*. But it is indeed strange that a handful of the Orientalists and a small minority of the exoteric scholars of Islam attribute these heretical belief to the Sufi shaikhs. The misunderstanding is perhaps caused by the Sufi doctrine of *wahdat-ul-wujud* and *fana* which look like *halul* and *ittihad* to superficial observers, but there is a world of difference between the two. *Wahdat-ul-wujud* and *fana* have erroneously been translated as Pantheism of Hinduism and Christianity by the Orientalists in a mad bid to find parallels in Hindu and Christian mysticism for each and every doctrine of Sufism.

But while Pantheism is steeped in *halul* and *ittihad*, the doctrines of *Wahdat-ul-wujud* and *Fana* are diametrically opposed to them. It is this fallacy of parallelism which is responsible for most of the mistakes and misunderstandings of the Orientalists about Sufism. The difference between non-Islamic Pantheism and Islamic *Wahdat-ul-wujud* can be summed up briefly by saying that while according to Pantheism everything is God, according to *Wahdat-ul-wujud*, everything is not God but is included in God's Being like the hand of John which is included in John's being but is not John simply because the part can by no stretch of imagination be regarded as the whole. Therefore while idol worship is perfectly justified in the cult of Pantheism, it is considered heretical in the cult of *Wahdat-ul-wujud*. Idol worship is as ridiculous as asking John's hand to give you what John has refused

to give to you. Therefore, while *halul* is regarded as heresy in Islam, it is the very life, blood and foundation of Christianity and Hinduism.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has rightly said, "Those of you who believe in God and, the Day of Judgement do not go astray." I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi pray to the Almighty to save me from the heretical beliefs of these people.

Section

The Qassaris

They are known as Qassaris after the name of Shaikh Abu Salih bin Hamdan bin Ahmad bin Amaratul Qassar who ranks as one of the greatest saints of his time. He belongs to the Malamatiya (self-reproaching) school of Sufism. He is famous for his subtle sayings on various doctrines of Sufism. He said, "God's satisfaction (*ridha*) is better for you than satisfaction of the people."

In other words your inward relationship with the Divine Lord should be better than your outward relationship with God, because attachment with people is really detachment from the Divine Being.

Commentary: It means you should try to please God more than people, because seeking pleasure of God is better than seeking pleasure of the people.

There is no need to elaborate the Malamatiya doctrine which has already been dealt with at some length.

What is Greatness?

Once I was going along a channel called Haira where I saw a notorious person called Nuh who was the chief of the vagabonds of the area. I said to him, "Oh, Nuh tell me what is greatness?" He said, "Do you want to know your greatness or mine?" I said, "Both." He said, "Greatness on my part is to replace my dress of honour with the patched frock (*muraqqah*) and act as a pious man to become a good Sufi, fear God and refrain from sins. While your greatness lies in throwing away the dress of piety (*muraqqah*) so that you no longer deceive and be deceived by them. Thus my greatness lies in obeying outward *shariat* and your greatness lies in the preservation of the inner merits of faith which is much more difficult. God knows best."

Section

The Taifuris

The Taifuris are known after Shaikh Abu Yazid Taifur bin Isa bin Saroshan al-Bistami who was one of the greatest shaikhs of his time. He belonged to that school of Sufism which prefers *sukr* (intoxication) over *sahw* (sobriety). Rapture and intoxication are *wahbi* not *kasbi*, which means that these are purely the gifts of God and cannot be acquired through effort. Therefore it can neither be attributed to any individual nor can it be borrowed from him. On the other hand, the Sufis belonging to the school of sobriety are not given to intoxication and cannot force it upon themselves by effort. Whereas the Sufis steeped in *sukr* are completely indifferent to mankind and are unable to call any of their attributes as their own. The Sufi shaikhs are agreed on the fact that none except the sober (*mustaqim*), who have finished with ecstasy (*ahwal*), are fit to guide the people. There are, however, some who advocate the imitation of *sukr* as a formality since the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "Weep or look like the one who wept, if you cannot weep." This can be done either by way of ostentation which is polytheism pure and simple or with the intention of imitating the pious in the hope that the Almighty makes you one of them as said by the Prophet, (s.a.w.), "He who imitates a community becomes one of them." It is, therefore, necessary to work as hard as possible for higher positions trusting that Allah Almighty will grant success in discovering the ways leading to gnosticism.

A shaikh has said:

"*Mushahidah* (visions) are the result of *mujahidah* (efforts)."

Commentary: The word '*mushahidah*' has been translated by the Orientalists as 'contemplation' which according to them is the final stage of the journey to God. But in the Sufi terminology '*mushahidah*' is something higher. It is the actual experience of *fana* which means loss of self in the Divine Being. Etymologically the word '*mushahidah*' is derived from '*shahud*' which means 'seeing'. This state of unification of the seeker's soul with the Divine Soul is actually the state of seeing, nay, actually experiencing God's Union.

But I say that under no circumstances, is *sukr* attainable by effort, try as hard as you can, for it is *wahbi* not *kasbi* (unacquirable gift of God). *Sahw* (sobriety) is acquirable through effort, but *sukr* is not.

Now I am going to explain the nature of intoxication and sobriety along with the views of the various Sufi shaikhs about them.

Difference between *Sukr* and *Sahw*

Know that *sukr* (intoxication) as well as *ghalbah* (ecstasy) according to the Sufi shaikhs is the intense and overwhelming love of God; and *sahw* (sobriety) is regaining of consciousness after intoxication.

Commentary: *Sukr* is the result of *fana* which, as already stated, means the loss of the seeker's being in the Divine Being, while *sahw* is the state of sobriety when the seeker comes out of *fana* and resumes or regains his individual self after intoxication.

The Sufi shaikhs generally give preference to *sahw* over *sukr* for the reason that the seeker in a permanent state of intoxication is lost to mankind forever, whereas the Sufis of the stage of *sahw* called *baqa-bi-Allah* or *abdiyat* (bondsmanship) are fully capable of doing their duty to both God and mankind.

Moreover, the seeker of the stage of *sahw* desires to remain as a humble slave of the Divine Lord rather than perpetually living in the state of *fana* where he does not know what he is, where he is, and for what purpose he is created. However there is a stage above *fana* and *baqa*. It is in fact a combination of both *fana* and *baqa* known as *jamiyyat*. The seeker of this stage is at once *Fani-fi-Allah* and *Baqi-bi-Allah*. He is so strong that no amount of rapture or intoxication can overpower him.

Some Sufis think that the stage of *sukr* is higher than that of *sahw*, while there are others who hold the opposite view. The former school consists of Abu Yazid Bistami (r.a.) and his followers. They are of the opinion that since in the state of *sahw* the seeker retains his corporeal or terrestrial self, this very thing becomes the greatest veil (*hijab-e-akbar*) between him and God. Whereas in the state of *sukr* when he loses himself in the Divine Being, his attributes, actions, intentions, and powers no longer remain human qualities, but become Divine qualities (*sifat*), and therefore it is the best, highest and most perfect state. The Qur'anic verse:

"And Daud Killed Jalut," [2:251]

shows that Prophet Daud, (a.s.), was in the state of sobriety so that the act of killing has been attributed to him; whereas the verse:

"It was not you who threw dust on the enemies it was Allah who did." [8:17],

shows that the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) was in the state of *sukr* (*fana* or union) so that God Almighty attributed the act of throwing dust to Himself and there is a world of difference between them. God attributed the action of one who was in himself to him and said "You did it." While the action of the other who had lost himself in God, was attributed to God Himself, and it was said, "It was not you who did it, it was Allah who did it."

This shows that the attribution of man's action to God is certainly better than attributing his action to himself, because in the former case man is supposed to subsist by God, while in the latter he subsists by himself. Again like Prophet Daud (a.s.), who got involved by casting a glance at the wife of Oriya because he was abiding in himself, but when the Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) looked at the wife of Zaid she no longer remained his wife. This is because he subsisted by God.

However, some Sufi shaikhs like Junaid and his followers are of the view that *sahw* (sobriety) is higher than *sukr* (intoxication), because intoxication involves the loss of one's personality and consciousness. It stands to reason that when everything depends on the seeker (*talib*) himself the truth of the matter cannot be ascertained unless he is sane and returns to himself from the state of oblivion (*sukr*). This is because the seeker of Truth has to be free from all handicaps.

For instance a blind person can never see things as they are and therefore cannot act in the right way. The reason why man is veiled from God by getting involved in worldliness is that he is unable to see things as they are. There are two ways of looking at things. Either he looks at them when he is in the state of *baqa* (subsistence in God) or when he is in the state of *fana* (self-annihilation). In the former case he sees everything existing by God, and in the latter case he sees everything lost in God's Being and becomes non-existent. That is to say he turns away from material things in either case. It is due to the importance of seeing things as they are that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), used to say:

"O my Lord show me the things as they are."

For, one who understands the reality of things, abides in peace. It is for this reason that Allah Almighty has said:

"Beware O you who have eyes to see." [59:2]

That is to say one who does not know things as they are, does not escape their mischief. And this cannot be attained except through the state of sobriety, because those who are steeped in intoxication cannot understand it.

Prophet Musa (a.s.) who was in the state of *sukr* could not bear a single flash of Divine Epiphany (*tajalli*) and fell down in ecstasy, while our Prophet (s.a.w.) who was in the state of sobriety continued to be more sober and more alive to his environment the more

he traversed the stages of Divine nearness till he was at two bows distance from Him. A poet has beautifully said:

"I continued to drink cup after cup of the wine of Divine grace; but neither the wine nor my thirst for it are diminished."

Commentary: This is with reference to the story of Hadhrat Musa (a.s.) who said, "O my Lord show Thyself to me so that I see Thee." [7:143]. But God said, "Thou cannot not see Me." [7:143]. And instead told him to look at Mount Sinai to see if he could bear the flash of Divine Beauty cast on it. But being unable to withstand the radiance he fell into a swoon. On the contrary, the Holy Prophet of Islam (s.a.w.) during his *Mi'raj* (flight) to Divine proximity not only retained his senses, but continued to become more and more sober and conscious of the Divine Presence even when he was at the distance of two bows from Him or even nearer.

We Muslims believe that the *Mi'raj* (ascendance) of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was not of a spiritual nature like the experience of *fana-fi-Allah* commonly enjoyed by the Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*), but it was of a physical nature experienced in the state of physical sobriety. This is difficult to understand, but if the reader turns his attention to the introduction of this book, he will see that the final stage of Divine nearness is *jamiyyat* which means a combination of both *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah* physically at one and the same time. In this state the storm of love is so great in the heart of the seeker in his physical state that he is not satisfied with any stage of nearness and goes on and on forever weeping and crying for greater union till death and even after death in the soul world and in paradise up to eternity.

When that is the case of the *auliya* of his *ummah*, the greatness of the Prophet (s.a.w.) the speed of his journey to God, his perfection, his excellence, and sublimity can neither be imagined nor described! Now since in this state of *jamiyyat,* the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) continued his flight in God both spiritually and physically, the culminating point of the flight was the place at two bows (*qaba qausain*) distance from the Divine Lord or even less (*aw adna*). The spiritual significance of "two bows" (*qausain*) and the word "*aw adna*" has ever since been the subject of discussion and research among the exoteric as well esoteric scholars of Islam, and many subtle explanations are available in Sufi literature which space does not permit to mention here.

My Shaikh, Hadhrat Abul Fadhl al-Khuttali, who subscribed to the Junaidian school has said, "*Sukr* is the play ground of children, while *sahw* is the battle field of the Friends of God." I am in full agreement with him and go to the length of saying that

the perfection of the admirers of *sukr* also lies in *sahw*. *Sukr* is the name of total negation of your individuality. Therefore while *sahw* appears to be an evil to the intoxicated, *sukr* is evil in itself because the man of *sukr* is unable to do his duties to mankind in so many capacities; as a father, husband, citizen, teacher, guide and above all as a true servant of God, capable of worship.

The truth of the statement can be verified by the story of Abu Uthman Maghribi (r.a.) who remained in the solitude of the desert for twenty long years during the early stages of his spiritual journey when he did not see the face of any human being. The result was that his body was reduced to a mere skeleton, his eyes turned into small holes and he looked no more like a human being. After twenty years of his life, he was told by the Almighty to go and live among the people. So he thought it was better to go to Makkah and remain in the company of the men of God for some time. When the news of his return reached Makkah, all the Sufi shaikhs living there went out to receive him. On seeing him reduced to bones and completely changed, they said, "O Abu Uthman you lived in the desert for twenty years and suffered privations to the extent that today you do not look like a human being. Now tell us — why did you go there, what did you see there, what did you get there, and why have you come back?" He replied, "I went there due to intoxication (*sukr*), experienced the hardships of intoxication and have come back disappointed and disillusioned." Hearing this the shaikhs said "O Abu Uthman it is not possible for anyone to explain the meanings of *sukr* and *sahw* better than you, since you have done full justice to the subject and explained the affliction of *sukr* in such vivid terms."

Thus *sukr* (intoxication) is an illusion of the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* though the seeker's human attributes (*sifat*, called *nafs*) have not yet been crushed, and this is a veil (*hijab*); while *sahw* (sobriety) is the realisation of the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah* when human attributes are crushed and this is real unveiling (*kashf*). In short, if somebody imagines that intoxication (*sukr*) is closer to the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* then sobriety (*sahw*), he is mistaken. This is because intoxication (over mastery of ecstasy) is a human weakness which bars one from the realisation of true *sahw*.

It is the extinction and not augmentation of the human qualities (called *bashriyat* or *nafs*) that are conducive to the realisation of *sahw*. This is *sahw* and *sukr* in a nutshell.

Commentary: This passage is very difficult to understand and therefore the translators, both in Urdu and English, were content to give only the literal translation and left it at that.

What this passage means is that the reader has been cautioned not to mix up *sukr* with *fana-fi-Allah*, because *sukr* is the name of the state (not stage) when the pilgrim is overpowered by ecstasy and rapture before reaching the stage of total *fana-fi-Allah* or during the initial stages of the spiritual journey, or even before commencing

the journey. Therefore, the author regards that kind of *sukr* as a veil because he gets intoxicated prematurely and is prevented from going further. Then he goes on to define *sahw* (sobriety) which is the state of final return or descent of the pilgrim to himself or to his individuality after he has achieved the highest stage of Divine nearness called union and started subsisting by Divine Attributes. That is why the author says *sukr* is an illusion of *fana* without the desired crushing of human qualities, and *sahw* is the realisation or achievement of *baqa-bi-Allah* when human attributes are lost and are replaced by Divine Attributes. This he calls *kashf* (revelation) experienced in *sahw*, as opposed to the veil experienced at *sukr*.

Then he makes the final disclosure saying that those who think that *sukr* is nearer to the stage of *fana* than *sahw*, are mistaken because during *sukr* (ecstasy) the pilgrim still retains his human or animal attributes (*sifat* called *nafs*) whereas these attributes are crushed at the stage of *sahw*. The rule is that the more the human attributes (*nafs*) are diminished, the greater is the degree of *sahw* (Divine realisation).

It is said that Shaikh Yahya bin Muadh (r.a.) once wrote to Shaikh Abu Yazid Bistami (r.a.) who was the advocate of *sukr* saying "What do you think about a person who sipped but one drop (of Divine love) and got intoxicated." Abu Yazid replied, "What do you think of a person who drinks oceans of the wine of Divine love and does not get intoxicated but clamours for more and more?"

Now some people think that Shaikh Yahya is talking about *sukr* and Abu Yazid about *sahw*. But the case is just the opposite. The man at the stage of *sahw* is he who cannot bear even a drop, while the man at the stage of *sukr* can drink the entire ocean and still cry for more. This is because wine is the instrument of intoxication, while *sahw* is the opposite of intoxication. Wine and *sahw* cannot go together. "Birds of a feather flock together," goes the proverb.

Kinds of *Sukr*

However, there are two kinds of *sukr:* It is either caused by the wine of riches (*muwaddat*), or by the wine of love (*muhabbat*). The former is the result of selfishness because it is caused by love for material benefits (*ni'mat*) while the latter is the result of selflessness since it is caused by the love for the Benefactor (*Munim*). Therefore he who goes in for material benefits is selfish as he is the lover of himself, and he who loves the Benefactor is selfless and a true lover of God. For a man of this stage *sukr* and *sahw* make no difference.

Kinds of *Sahw*

Similarly *sahw* is of two kinds. It is either:

i) caused by negligence (*ghaflat*); or
ii) caused by love (*muhabbat*).

Sahw born of negligence is the greatest veil (*hijab-i-akbar*), while *sahw* caused by love is the greatest revelation (*kashf-i-abyan*).

Commentary: What the author means by the intoxication caused by riches is really the intoxication of pride and arrogance of worldly people, while the intoxication of the second type is that of the *auliya-Allah* (saints) who feel intoxicated in Divine presence. Similarly, *sahw* or sobriety of the inferior type is that of ordinary worldly people who are quite clever in bargaining and amassing wealth, whereas sobriety of the second and superior kind is that of the *auliya-Allah* whose vessels are so vast that neither do they burst nor overflow however deep they drink at the fountain of Divine nearness. They are the people who drink oceans of the wine of Divine love but do not get intoxicated and cry for more and more.

Therefore sobriety caused by negligence is really intoxication (of the worldly people) called arrogance, although it appears to be sobriety, and the intoxication of *auliya-Allah* caused by love is sobriety although it appears to be intoxication. This is because when the foundation is sound *sahw* is *sukr* and *sukr* is *sahw*. However when the foundation is precarious i.e. when the relationship with God is not sound, both *sukr* and *sahw* are shaky. In short, the difference between *sahw* and *sukr* exists only when they are based on different foundations. When the sun of Divine Beauty rises *sahw* and *sukr* become one, because their frontiers are contiguous, and the one starts from the point where the other ends. Moreover, the terms like beginning and end are only relative and the difference between them vanishes as soon as the pilgrim becomes one with the One Being.

Someone has beautifully said: "When the sun of Divine Beauty shows its face, the sober and the intoxicated become one."

Commentary: What a wonderful explanation of *sukr* and *sahw*. This degree of clarity is possible only at the highest stage of *ma'rifat*. Generally, what is understood by the word *sukr*, even by a number of Sufi shaikhs, is that *sukr* is another name of *fana*. But our authority says it is not. According to him *sukr* is only a state of ecstasy, not *fana*.

If the reader looks back to the introduction of this book, he will see that at the final stage of the spiritual journey called *jamiyyat*, the pilgrim combines in himself both the states of *fana* and *baqa* simultaneously and as such *sukr* and *sahw* lose their meanings for him.

Khawaja Ghulam Farid has said: "My condition now has undergone two changes that is my *fana* has become *baqa*, and *baqa, fana*."

In another verse he says: "I am in a state in which union has turned into separation, so that both the lover and the Beloved stand clearly apart."

Shaikh Ahmad Sirhindi (r.a.), known as *Mujaddid Alf-i-Thani* once wrote to his Shaikh, Khawaja Baqi-bi-Allah (r.a.) "Sire! I am now in a state where my union has become separation."

Union becomes separation, or *fana* becomes *baqa*, or *sukr* becomes *sahw* only at the stage when the spiritual pilgrim reaches the stage of *jamiyyat* when he is in *fana* and *baqa* simultaneously and enjoys the pleasures of union with, as well as the pangs of separation from, this Divine Beloved. This is because the storm of love in his heart is so great that he is not satisfied at any stage of nearness (*qurb*). Since there is no end to the Divine Being, there is also no end to the stages of Divine nearness.

There were two shaikhs at Sarkhas. One was Shaikh Abul Fadhl Hasan (r.a.) and the other Shaikh Luqman (r.a.). Once Shaikh Luqman went to see Shaikh Abul Fadhl and found him turning the pages of a book. He said, "O Abul Fadhl what are you searching?" "I am searching for what you have lost," he said. Luqman said, "What is the difference?" He said, "It is you who have created the differences and asked me about it. Give up *sukr* and come back to *sahw* to be able to see that no difference really exists and that you and I are after the same thing."

This is the extent of the difference between the Taifuris and Junaidis. Shaikh Abu Yazid's chief characteristics was the path of asceticism and solitude which he wanted his *murid* to follow, the path which is really commendable and charming if ever one can act on it.

Section

The Junaidiya School

This school (order) is known after Abul Qasim al-Junaid bin Muhammad (r.a.) known as the Peacock of the saints of his times. Shaikh Junaid (r.a.) ranks as the guide of the

guides and *Imam* of the *imams*. He upheld the doctrine of *sahw* (sobriety) as opposed to that of *sukr* (intoxication) of the Taifuris, as already stated. But the most prominent and popular doctrine among the Sufi shaikhs in general is this doctrine of *sahw* (sobriety), despite opposition from the school of Abu Yazid. But I am not going into the details for reasons of brevity. Those who are fond of knowing the details thereof are advised to consult some more books of the Sufi shaikhs.

It is stated that when Hussain bin Mansur (al-Hallaj) left the company of his shaikh, Umar bin Uthman, in a fit of ecstasy and went over to Shaikh Junaid, he said, "What can I do for you?" "I do not like to live with madmen," replied Junaid, "because *suhbat* (companionship) demands *sihhat* (sanity). When companionship is accompanied by insanity, the result cannot be different from what you saw in the company of Sahl bin Tustari (one of the former shaikhs of Hussain) and Umar." On this, Hussain said, "O Shaikh, *sahw* and *sukr* are the attributes of the seeker, and as long as he retains his attributes he is veiled from God." Junaid said, "O son of Mansur, you have misunderstood the meanings of *sahw* and *sukr*; *sahw* is the name of the true relationship of the seeker with God, and can, by no stretch of imagination, be termed as the seeker's attributes, or anything capable of being acquired through effort. And I see a lot of aberrations and abnormalities in your speech."

Commentary: The whole world knows that Hallaj was a God-intoxicated saint. His slogan of "*Ana'l Haq* (I am the Truth)" though apparently un-Islamic, has been interpreted by almost all the shaikhs of Islam to mean that it was not Hallaj who said this, but it was *Haq* (God) Himself who said it, for Hallaj was no longer there, for he had lost himself completely in Godhead (*dhat*). This is in accordance with the Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) which says:

"Allah says when my servant tries to come close to Me through voluntary prayers, I love him and come so close to him that I become his eyes and he sees by Me, and I become his ears and he hears by Me, and I become his hands and he works by Me, and I become his feet and he walks by Me and I become his tongue and he speaks by Me, and I give him what he desires."

That is why most of the shaikhs of Islam have exonerated him of the charge of heresy and consider him a saint of a high order but lacking self-control. The reasons why Junaid countersigned his death warrant is that he as a great Sufi Master was in favour of awarding exemplary punishment to Hallaj to forestall any such extravagance on the part of budding Sufis in the future. He upheld the doctrine of sobriety (*sahw*) and could not tolerate irresponsible utterances like "*Ana'l Haq*" which might have given rise to controversies, and also set a bad example of immature Sufism for future aspirants.

Section

The Nuriya Doctrine

This order is known after Shaikh Abul Hasan Nuri who is one of the most eminent Sufi masters. He is nicknamed *Nur*. Among the *mashaikh* he is regarded as a man of great spiritual talents and sound judgement. His concept of Sufism is acceptable at all hands. In principle he is inclined to prefer *safwat* (nearness or union) to *faqr* (*abdiyat* or separation).

Commentary: The word *safwat* literally means intimacy or friendship. Technically, it stands for the state of *fana* while *faqr* which literally means poverty stands for *baqa, abdiyat* or the state of separation.

But in social laws (*mu'amilat*), he follows Junaid.

Commentary: It may be mentioned that generally Junaid upholds the doctrine of *baqa-bi-Allah*, while Abu Yazid Bistami favours *fana-fi-Allah*. What the author means here is that although Abul Hasan Nuri follows Junaid in social laws, he is opposed to the Junaidi school of *baqa* and agrees with Abu Yazid's school of thought called Taifuriya (*Taifur* being the nickname of Abu Yazid).

One of his peculiarities is that he gives preference to the needs of his companions over his own, and regards companionship devoid of sacrifice as faithlessness. He maintains that self-sacrifice in favour of friends is obligatory *(faridha)* in Sufism. He used to say, "Solitude is a fortress against *shaytan* (Satan), and companionship is liked by *Rahman* (the Merciful)."

Commentary: The importance of self-negation or selflessness has been stressed in the following Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.):

"None of you is a true Muslim unless he likes for others what he likes for himself."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) did act upon what he said. He lived like the lowest of the low and the poorest of the poor going without food for several days on end, sleeping on rough and tough mats and living in a small mud hut, so that no one in the world was poorer than he. This is real socialism as opposed to the socialism of the so-

called socialist countries where the standard of living of the high government servants is in no way lower than their counterparts in the capitalist society of the West.

I am now going to describe what '*ithar*' (sacrifice) really means in Sufism, although its mysteries will be elaborated at length in the proper chapter.

The Nature of *Ithar (Haqiqat-al-Ithar)*

Allah *Ta'ala*, the Great, the Magnificent has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"And they give preference (to others' needs) being themselves in need." [59:9]

This verse particularly refers to *Ashab-as-Suffah* (Companions of the Bench). Real *ithar* is to forego one's own right for the sake of one's companion, to prefer his needs over one's own needs and to bear pain for his pleasure. It is said by a Sufi shaikh: "Self-sacrifice is the name of rendering help to others as commanded by the Almighty to his Prophet (s.a.w.) in the verse:

"Take to forgiveness, command what is just and refrain from the ignorant." [7:199]

Commentary: Here forgiveness is recommended because this is also a kind of self sacrifice. That is to say you should forgive those who displease you in any way.

This will be explained at length in the chapter on Companionship.

Kinds of *Ithar*

Ithar is of two kinds: *Ithar* in companionship (*suhbat*), and *ithar* in love (*muhabbat*). The former is full of pains and troubles for the sake of companions and the latter is the source of pleasure and happiness. *Ithar muhabbat* is manifest in the following story.

Sacrifice of Abul Hasan Nuri

It is said that when Ghulam Khalid (*Wazir* of the *Khalifah* of Baghdad) arrested the three well known Sufi shaikhs, Nuri, Raqqam and Abu Hamzah as a result of a private

grudge and presented them to the Commander of the Faithful saying that they were infidels, and if they were executed, infidelity would be uprooted for good and that the people would rest in peace, the emperor at once ordered them to be executed. But to the utter bewilderment of all who were present, when the executioner drew his sword and approached Raqqam, Nuri jumped forward and offered his neck instead cheerfully. The executioner smiled and said, "My dear man, the sword is not a thing to be loved. Your turn is soon coming."

Nuri said, "I know life is the dearest thing in the world, but my aim is self-sacrifice for the benefit of the friends. I wish I could sacrifice the remaining few moments of life for my friend's sake, since a single moment of the earthly life is worth million of years in the hereafter. The reason is that this world is the domain of service (*khidmat*) and the next is the domain of God's nearness *(qurbat)*. What one sows here one reaps there."

When this news reached the *khalifah* he was amazed by Nuri's sentiments and sagacity and entrusted the matter to the chief *qadhi*, Abul Abbas bin Ali for investigation. The *qadhi* took the three Sufis to his residence, asked questions about *shariat* and *tariqat* and was convinced about their high scholarship in Islamic learning and his own shortcomings. Seeing this Nuri said, "O *qadhi*! You think you have exhausted all questions, but in fact you have asked nothing. Verily there are servants of God who eat by God, drink by God, abide by God and speak by God and if they miss His vision for a single moment, they cry bitterly."

The *qadhi* was wonderstruck to hear this and wrote to the emperor saying, "If these men are heretics, I dare say there is not a single Muslim in the world." At this the *khalifah* sent for them and asked, "Is there anything I can do for you?" Their reply was, "We want nothing except that you kindly forget us. You should neither trouble us to come to your court nor feel sorry for our absence." The *khalifah* wept and sent them away with honour.

Sacrifice of Abdullah bin Umar

Nafia (one of the servants of Abdullah bin Umar) related that once ibn Umar desired to eat fish, but it was not available in the market. At last it was found after several days. It was cooked and presented to him. When a beggar came and asked for food, ibn Umar ordered the fish to be given to him. Nafia intervened saying, "Sire, you have been wishing to have fish for the last several days and now that it is available you want it to be given to the beggar. He is not particularly interested in fish and would be glad to get anything instead." Ibn Umar said, "No, I have decided to give it to the beggar in obedience to the Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.), 'Whenever a man has a desire for something and then subdues that desire for the sake of others he is forgiven.' Now the fish is *haram* (unlawful) for me."

Sacrifice of Nine Sufis

It is related that once ten Sufis who were travelling together in a desert lost their way. They exhausted their store of water and were extremely thirsty. There was only a little water enough for one man, but none of them touched it for the sake of his companions with the result that all died and only one of them survived. Now that there was none to share it, he drank it and escaped death. When somebody said, "It would have been better if you also had not drunk it," he replied, "I was obliged by *shariat* (Muslim law) to drink. Had I not drunk it, I would have been guilty of committing suicide." The man retorted, "Do you think your comrades violated the Divine Law in refusing to drink water?" He said, "No, they refused to drink to save the others, but when I was left alone, it was my duty to drink it in obedience to Divine Law."

Sacrifice of Hadhrat Ali

The night when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), migrated to Madinah and Ali slept on his bed to make the enemy believe that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was still there to be assassinated any moment, God Almighty united the angel Jibrail and Mikail in a bond of mutual friendship and said, "One of you is to live longer than the other, so who is prepared to have shorter life for the sake of the other ?" But none was prepared to give sacrifice for the other. At this the Almighty said, "Look at Ali who chose to die for the sake of his brother Muhammad and scored a victory over both of you. Now I command both of you to go and save Ali."

They went to Makkah, and sat at the right and left of Ali to protect him. Jibrail congratulated Ali and said, "O Ali be happy God Almighty has established your superiority over the angels, and you are still sleeping." It is on this occasion that the following verse was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.):

"Allah is extremely kind to those who sell [sacrifice] their lives for winning His pleasure." [2:207]

Commentary: Maulana Ashraf Ali Thanwi, an eminent Sufi shaikh of India has said in his book, *Ilm-o-Amal* (Theory and Practice) that Allah Almighty has summed up all the four stages of the spiritual path in this brief verse. The words *'yashri nafsahu'* indicate the attainment of the state of *fana-fi-Allah* through absolute self-abnegation and total submission to the will of the Lord to the extent of self-annihilation. The word '*maradhatillah*' refers to the state of winning Allah's pleasure through total submission. The word *rauf* is derived from *rafah* (kindness) and it means 'the kindest'. Now who can be more kind to you than the one who takes you

as his beloved (*mahbub*)? The word *ibad* is the plural of *'abd'* which literally means a servant. But in Sufi terminology it stands for the state of *baqa-bi-Allah*. That shows all the five stages of the spiritual path namely (i) the stage of *mujahidah* or the struggle for achieving union with the Divine Being, (ii) the stage of union known as *fana-fi-Allah*, (iii) the stage of *ridha* (God's pleasure), (iv) the stage of *mahbubiyyat* (belovedness), and finally (v) the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah* known as *abdiyat* have been summed up in this single *ayat*. Opinions of the Sufi masters differ over the question as to which of the stages mentioned above is the final stage in the spiritual journey. Some say it is *fana-fi Allah*, some maintain that it is *mahbubiyyat*, while there are others who think that the final stage is *baqa-bi-Allah*, also called *abdiyat*. The fact of the matter is there is not much difference between all the stages. One who has completed the spiritual journey does pass through all the five stages mentioned above. The difference is only that of emphasis.

Sacrifice of the Wounded Sahabah

When the Muslims were engaged in the battle of Uhud near Madinah, a pious lady of the Ansar tribe rushed to the battlefield with a bucket full of water. Seeing this, a dying soldier shouted for water. As the lady stepped forward to give him water another wounded soldier cried for water. On this the first soldier refused to take it and bade her to give it to the other. When she went there, a third wounded soldier cried for water. The second soldier refused to take it and asked the lady to give it to the third soldier. In this way she offered water to seven wounded soldiers and every one refused to take water in preference to his brother lying next to him. When the lady looked around, she found all of them dead and the water was still there. It was at that time that the verse, "And they give preference to others while they are in dire need themselves," [59:9], was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.)

Sacrifice of an Israelite

There was an ascetic among the Israelites who had been devoted to God's worship for the last four hundred years. Once he addressed God Almighty like this, "O my Lord! If Thou hadst not created all these mountains, Thy humble servants would have traversed the whole globe to see Thy wonders." The Prophet of that time was commanded by the Almighty to go and say to the ascetic, "It is none of thy business to interfere in Our Kingdom. And once thou hadst the audacity to challenge Our will, We have struck off thy name from the book of the blessed and entered it in the book of the cursed." Hearing this the ascetic felt overjoyed and bowed to the ground in gratitude. "What is the occasion of thanksgiving on being condemned ?" said the Prophet of God. He replied, "My jubilation is not because I am condemned, but because of the fact that my name is there at least

in one of the books of my Lord. But I have a request to make." "What is it ?" asked the Prophet. He said, "Please ask my Lord to make me so large that the whole hell is filled up by me and there is no room left for any one else except in paradise." The answer from the Almighty was: "The trial you went through was not intended to condemn you, but to announce to the world that you and those recommended by you shall find a place in paradise."

Sacrifice of a Lion

Once I asked Ahmad Hammed of Sarakhs, "How did your conversion take place?" He said, "Once I left Sarakhs with a herd of camels for the desert and lived there for a long time. My habit was to place whatever food I had before my comrades and go hungry myself. This was in obedience to the Divine command:

'They give preference to the requirements of others even if they are in dire need themselves.' [59:9].

"Once a hungry lion came out of the jungle and killed one of my camels. Then he retired to a mount and roared. Hearing this the wild animals gathered around the place. The lion tore the camel into pieces for the animals and went back to the mount. When the animals like jackals and foxes had their fill and gone away, the lion came down to take his share. But when he was about to eat he saw a lame fox approaching. He went back to the mount and let the fox eat. When the fox retired, he came down and had his share. Before going away, he said to me in low unmistakable human voice, 'O Ahmad! It is like a dog to make a sacrifice in terms of a mouthful of food. A great man is he who sacrifices his life for others.' Having been thus guided by the Almighty I repented and resolved to take the path of God."

Ja'far Khuldi has said, "Once Shaikh Abul Hasan Nuri was making the following prayer to God and I overheard him. 'O my Lord! If you have to fill Your hell with human beings whom You have created by Your knowledge, power and love, then make me big enough to fill the whole of hell so that everybody else goes to paradise.' I was amazed to hear this and dreamt the same night that I should go and tell Abul Hasan Nuri that Allah Almighty had forgiven him for the kindness and love he had for mankind."

He was called Nuri because when he spoke in darkness the whole room was filled with light (*nur*) of his spirituality. It was by this light that he could read the minds of his *murids*. That is why Junaid called him "The Spy of Minds" *(Jasus al-Qulub)*.

In short, self-sacrifice is the keynote of Nuri's doctrine which is regarded as the noblest state and the highest success in the eyes of the people of spiritual insight *(ahl basirat)*,

since nothing is more difficult in the world than sacrificing one's life and surrendering the objects of one's desire. God Almighty has said:

"You can never attain to salvation until you give away what is dearest to your heart." [3:92]

How can giving away of wealth, health, food and garments bear comparison with giving life? Someone went to Shaikh Muhammad Ruwaym and asked for an advice. He said:

"O My son! Nothing is possible without sacrificing your life in this path. If you cannot do it, do not waste your time in indulging in matters pertaining to Sufism."

For everything except giving life is mere fun and play in this path. Says Allah Almighty in the Holy Qur'an:

"Do not think those who are slain in the path of Allah are dead. No, they are alive and are given food and drink by their Lord." [3:169]

He has also said:

"Do not call dead those who are slain in the path of God. No, they are living." [2:154]

In short, eternal life in Divine embrace can only be possible by sacrificing life and total surrender of your interests to the interests of your friend as desired by Allah Almighty. But mind you, all talk about surrender or non-surrender is possible only in the domain of duality or multiplicity *(tafarqah),* whereas from the viewpoint of *ma'rifat* (gnosis) in the domain of unity *(jama')* there is nothing but nothingness. For, nothingness is really something and losing yourself is really gaining yourself. So long as the seeker continues to seek worldly benefits, he gains nothing. But when he is overwhelmed by Divine rapture or ecstasy *(jadhb)* he rises above or goes beyond loss or gains and is totally lost in the ocean of Divinity and loses his very name and identity to be called by any name or referred to by any sign. As said by Shibli:

"I have completely forgotten and lost consciousness of myself. My attributes are no more mine. Today I am lost to the entire world and live by nothing but in name."

Section

The Sahliyya Doctrine

This doctrine is attributed to Shaikh Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari who is one of the greatest and most prominent Sufis as already stated. He is regarded as the Sovereign Shaikh of his time with tremendous power of supernatural deeds, and spiritual strength. His doctrine consists of self-annihilation *(ijtihad)*, self-mortification *(mujahidah-i-nafs)*, and

self-discipline *(riyadhat)*. This is what he forced his *murids* to accomplish. It is stated that he directed one of his *murids* to recite *"Ya Allah, Ya Allah"* the whole day long. He told him to do the same thing the second and third day continuously. When the man had done that he told him to repeat the same thing for three consecutive nights. In this way he got so much engrossed in this *dhikr* that he continued to do it in sleep as well. Thereafter he told him to give up reciting by the tongue and start meditating on God's Being. The result was that he was totally lost in meditation, so that when a piece of wood fell from the ceiling and broke his head he was totally unconscious about it. But every drop of blood that fell, turned into the words: *"Allah, Allah"* inscribed on the ground.

To be brief, self-annihilation is the doctrine of the Sahlis; service and respect to the saints *(khidmat wa hurmat-i-darweshan)* is the doctrine of Hamdunis, and contemplation *(moraqbahi-batin)* is the doctrine of Junaidis. But austerities and self-mortification is of no avail without knowing the true nature of one's lower (beastly) self *(nafs)*. Now I am going to describe the nature and characteristics of the lowerself. I will, then, lay down the principles and rules governing self-mortification so that the seeker gets acquainted with the entire discipline.

The Nature of *Nafs* (Lowerself) and *Hawa* (Lust)

Know that etymologically the word *nafs* means the reality (*haqiqat*), or being (*wujud*) or essence (*dhat*) of anything. But technically it has various connotations, some of which are opposed to one another. According to one school of thought, *nafs* stands for the soul (*ruh*), while others hold that it means audacity (*murrawwat*), corpus, blood and so on. But the Sufi masters endorse none of these views and maintain that *nafs* is the source and fountainhead of evil and mischief. A section of Sufis however regard *nafs* as the propelling force in man, while another group thinks it is tantamount to life. But all are agreed on the fact that evil springs from it.

Evil is of two kinds: (i) evil deeds and (ii) evil feelings such as arrogance, jealousy, miserliness, anger, vindictiveness and all other vices which are against *shariat* and reason. It is through discipline that one is purified and gets rid of them. There are two ways of purification: *taubah* (repentance) and *riadhat* (worship). Evil deeds are given up by means of *taubah*, and evil feelings and ideas by worship. Moreover, good deeds produce good feelings in the heart and good feelings result in good actions.

In brief, man is the combination of *nafs* (lowerself) and *ruh* (divine or angelic self). These are the two subtle centers in the human being, like the angels, Satan, and paradise and hell. *Ruh* is the source of virtue and *nafs* is the source of vice in the same manner as the eye is the source of seeing, the ear of hearing, and the tongue of tasting. Therefore, the purpose of all acts of worship and austerities is to fight and subdue the forces of the *nafs* (the animal or beastly self) without which it is not possible to achieve Divine

nearness. In other words, opposition to the lowerself leads to man's salvation and submission to it ends in disaster. Allah Almighty has therefore commanded mankind to oppose the lowerself and obey the angelic self (the *ruh*). Says He:

"... he who resists the calls of his *nafs* finds a place in paradise." [39:40–41]

He has also said:

"You fell victim to arrogance when your *nafs* disobeyed what the Prophet commanded."

The Holy Qur'an mentions Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) as saying:

"I do not claim immunity from the mischief of my *nafs* which commands evil except when one is saved by Allah's mercy." [12:53]

Moreover, our Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"When Allah wishes well for his servant, He enables him to detect the mischief of his *nafs*."

Moreover, it is given in the annals of the prophets that God said to Prophet Daud (a.s.):

"O Daud! Oppose thy *nafs*, for my love lies in its opposition."

What I have said above pertains to the attributes of man. Now, in order to understand these attributes, knowledge of the owner of these attributes i.e. man himself is necessary. Unless one knows himself, one cannot understand anything else, much less the Creator Himself whose knowledge is incumbent upon man. And man can recognise his Creator's eternity only through his own mortality, or His *baqa* (subsistence) through his own *fana* (noughting). It is clear from the following verse that the Almighty has charged the infidels with ignorance:

"And who can turn his face away from Ibrahim's religion (Islam) except the one who is ignorant of himself." [2:130]

One of the Sufi masters has said:

"He who is ignorant of himself is more ignorant of everything other than himself."

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"He who knows himself already knows his Lord."

That is to say, he who knows his own mortality (*fana*) knows Allah's eternity, or he who

knows his own humility (*dhil*) knows His Majesty (*izz)* or he who knows his subservience (*'ubudiyat*), knows His overlordship. It means he who does not know himself, knows nothing else. Here self knowledge means *ma'rifat* (gnosis) of manhood (*ma'rifat-i-insaniyyat*). Reality of man is a controversial issue among the Muslim scholars. There is a school of thought which maintains that man is nothing but soul (*ruh*), and that this body is an armour or a protective ring around it. Or the body is residence or protector so that the soul is protected against the elements of nature; and that beauty and intelligence are the attributes of the *ruh*. But this view is untenable because even when the soul (*jan*) goes out of the body, it is still known as man (*insan*). The only difference is that when the soul is in the body he is known as a living man, but when the soul has departed he is called a dead man. Moreover, the animals also have a soul but it is not called man. If the existence of soul in man entitled him to be called man, all the animals having soul could also be called human beings. Therefore, the theory stands rejected.

There is another school which holds that what is known as man is the combination of the body and soul, but when they are separated from each other, they are no more a human being. For instance, when two colours white and black are together on a horse's skin, it is called "brindled" (*ablaq*). But when it has only one colour, it is called white or black. But this theory also is untenable in view of what the Almighty has said in the following verse:

"Was there not a span of time when man was not worth mentioning." [76:1]

Here he has been called man (*insan*) even though his body and soul were not put together.

There is yet another school of thought according to which man is an indivisible atom seated in the heart, to which all human attributes (*ausaf*) are attributed. This also is wrong, because if you kill a man and take away his heart, he is still called man. Moreover, he was known as man even when the soul and the body had not joined together.

There is, however, a group of fake Sufis who maintain, quite erroneously, that man is not who eats and drinks and is subject to change, but he is a Divine Mystery, and this body is just a garment made of the admixture of different ingredients and juxtaposition of the body and the soul. But my answer to them is that it is universally admitted that all the same persons, fools, faithful, infidels and ignorant can be called human beings although there is no such thing in them as "Divine Mystery." All of them eat and drink and are subject to change. So there is nothing special in the human body which could be called "man" before or after his death. Says Allah Almighty:

"And we created man out of the best clay...." [23:12-14]

So according to the description given above by Allah Almighty who is the Veracious of the veracious (*asdaq-us-sadiqin*), this earthly form (human body) after all purification and beautification (mentioned above), is known as "man". Consequently, a section of the *ulama* belonging to the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* have said that man is the name given

to a definite figure (*surat-i-mauhud*) which even death cannot change. It is generally admitted that what is most correct (*sahih tar)* is most perfect (*kamil tar*). According to the Sufi masters, man's perfection is based on its three elements: *ruh* (angelic soul), *nafs* (animal soul) and body (*jasd*). Each of them has an attribute. The attribute of *ruh* is intelligence (*aql*), the attribute of *nafs* is passion and the attribute of the body is feeling and sensation. Man is a microcosm (a minor universe). The universe consists of two worlds: the physical and the spiritual world. Both of these worlds are included in man. The physical world is composed of the four elements: water, fire, air and earth. This is manifest in man in the form of four temperaments: phlegm, blood, bile and melancholy. The spiritual world consists of paradise, hell, and the day of judgement (*arasat*), which are reflected in man in the shape of the *ruh*, *nafs* and *jasd* respectively. Paradise is the expression of Allah's pleasure and hell represents His wrath. And both of these have their counterparts in man. Paradise corresponds with man's spiritual bliss, and hell with the rancour and obnoxiousness of his lowerself. Similarly, man's happiness is the result of his spiritual union with God, and his sorrow is the result of his being veiled (separated) from Him through the vices of his *nafs*.

This holds good in both worlds, this world and the hereafter. Unless man is rescued from hell, he cannot reach paradise which is another name for God's approval (the pleasure of union with Him). Similarly, unless man does not turn his face to God and refrain from other than God by acting upon the commands of *shariat*, he cannot find peace of mind and happiness in this world.

In short, man's soul leads him to paradise and his *nafs* to hell. Paradise is achieved by the force of his intelligence (*aql*) which is the attribute of his soul; and hell is reached by the force of his passion which is the attribute (*sifat*) of his *nafs*. The *ruh* pulls you to the good and the *nafs* to the evil. Therefore, the seekers of God should always try to oppose their *nafs* so that the force of *ruh* gets mastery over the force of the *nafs*, and leads them to the domain of Divine nearness.

Sayings of the Sufi Shaikhs about *Nafs*

Says Dhunnun of Egypt:

"The thickest veil is the veil of *nafs*."

And obedience (*mutabiyat*) to *nafs* is disobedience to Allah Almighty, which is the bedrock of all vices.

Abu Yazid Bistami says:

"*Nafs* is a passion which is never satisfied except by evil."

It never leads you to Truth (God).

Muhammad bin Ali Tirmidhi says:

"You want to know God by your *nafs* in you. How can you do that when your *nafs* does not know itself."

That is to say, when the *nafs* itself is veiled from God, how can it lead you to God.

Junaid of Baghdad says:

"Heresy (*kufr*) is founded on obedience to *nafs*."

This is because *nafs* is opposed to Truth and tends to lead you to the direction opposite to God.

Abu Sulaiman Darani says:

"*Nafs* is betraying and hindering. The best of deeds is to oppose it."

This means that because it leads you astray and prevents you from reaching Allah's nearness, you must oppose it if you are desirous of achieving His nearness. Sayings about the vices of *nafs* are too many to be described here. I will therefore come back to the main theme i.e. Sahl's discipline of purification of *nafs*. May Allah enable me to do so!

Purification of Nafs

Says Allah Almighty:

"Those who strive to attain to Our nearness, We show them the ways to Us." [29:69]

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"The true *mujahid* is he who strives hard to gain Allah's nearness."

He has also said:

"We have returned from the lesser to the greater *jihad*."

When he was asked what the greater *jihad* was, he replied, "It is *jihad* (struggle) against *nafs*." The reason why he gave preference to *jihad* against *nafs* over *jihad* against the

enemies of Islam, is that resistance to the forces of *nafs* is more arduous and requires greater effort.

You must know (may Allah Almighty exalt you!), that purification of the lowerself (*mujahidah-i-nafs*) is well known and is accepted and practised by the people of all religions and communities. But the Sufi community attaches more importance to it, and has been practising it with greater vigour than others. The eminent Sufi masters have pointed out greater mysteries and subtleties on this topic. Sahl bin Abdullah of Tustar has gone to the extreme end, and his *mujahidah* (austerities) are nothing short of miracles. It is said that he used to eat once in a fortnight and continued to do it for years on end. It is he who maintains that *mujahidah* is the direct cause of *mushahidah* (union); whereas the rest of the *mashaikh* maintain that *mushahidah* is the result of Divine Grace (*fadhl*) and cannot be achieved by effort.

Commentary: In scholastic terminology the term "*kasbi*" is used to indicate what is attained by effort, and "*wahbi*" is what is bestowed upon man through Divine Grace. Literally the word "*kasb*" means effort and "*wahb*" means generosity.

That is why Sahl regards the life of this world as superior to that of the next world because success in the latter depends on effort in the former. He says, "This world is the place of service (*khidmat*) and the next is the place of *qurbat* (union)." *Qurbat* without *khidmat* is no *qurbat*. It follows, therefore, that *mujahidah* is the direct cause of *mushahidah*, although *mujahidah* is possible only through God's assistance. It is rightly said:

"*Mujahidah* begets *mushahidah*."

There are others who maintain that union with the Divine Lord is not the result of effort. Whoever has attained union has done so purely through Divine grace. Divine grace has nothing to do with effort. According to them, the purpose behind *mujahidah* (effort) is purification of the lowerself, not union with God. They argue that *mujahidah* is an act of man, whilst *mushahidah* is the act of God. How can God's work be propelled by man's work? But Sahl bases his stand on the following verse of the holy Qur'an:

"Those who strive for union with Us, We guide them towards Us." [29:69]

That is to say, he who goes through *mujahidah* gains *mushahidah*. Moreover, the purpose behind the advent of all the prophets, gospels and commandments is to exhort mankind to strive for the attainment of the goal which is nothing but union with God. Had union not been the goal, the prophets and their books and commandments would have been superfluous (*batil*). Furthermore, all the affairs of this world and of the next are also governed by this rule of causality. The moment you disregard the rule of causality, the whole edifice of

shariat crumbles to pieces. In that case neither food remains the cause of satisfying the hunger, nor the garments for preventing cold; and the whole order of the world goes upside down. It, therefore, follows that to recognise the law of causality is real *tauhid* (true religion) and to negate it is falsehood. This is a matter of everday experience and nobody can falsify his own experience.

Do you not see how an untrained horse is forced to give up beastly qualities and adopt human qualities by dint of hard training, so that eventually it picks up the whip with its mouth and gives it to its master, and moves the ball with its foot? Similarly you can teach a non-Arab raw youth to speak fluent Arabic by hard struggle so that his mother tongue (language) is exchanged with a foreign language. In the same manner a wild falcon is trained into a pet who comes and goes according to your beck and call, and likes the pangs of captivity more than the pleasures of freedom. Moreover, it is through training (*mujahidah*) that prey killed by a trained dog is regarded (in *shariat*) as *halal* (lawful) and the one killed by an untrained (ignorant) man as *haram* (unlawful). Instances of this kind can be multiplied endlessly.

This shows that *mujahidah* (effort) is an inevitable condition for success in all affairs, both spiritual and temporal. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) worked so hard in the way for gaining nearness to the Almighty, thereby achieving success in life, peace of mind and general safety that he went through untold privations such as continuous fasts (for several days without even the slightest refreshment at dawn or sunset as is customary during Ramadhan), and vigils in the night, till he was commanded to have mercy on himself in the following verse:

"We have revealed the Qur'an to you not to torture you." [20:2]

It is reported by Abu Hurairah that, "Once the Prophet (s.a.w.) was carrying bricks for the construction of a mosque and was feeling extremely exhausted. I said, 'Please stop doing this work, I will do it for you.' He said, 'O Abu Hurairah go and help someone else; for me no comfort is greater than the comfort in the hereafter.' "

Hayan bin Kharjah of Makkah has said that he once asked Abdullah bin Umar about the meaning of *jihad* (*ghaz*). He said, "Start both *jihad* and food from the nearest end (yourself). For, if you are killed cheerfully you will be raised (in *qiyamat*) cheerfully. If you will try to show it off, you will be raised in that condition. If you fight with the intention of God's pleasure, you will get God's pleasure."

But those who hold the opposite view say that the verse:

"Those who work hard for Our sake, We guide them to Ourself," [29:69]

is reversibly correct, i.e.:

"Those who have been guided by Us, work hard for Our sake."

That is why the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) declared:

"No one among you will get salvation through his deeds."

When he was asked, "What about you?" He said, "I also will be saved not by my deeds, but by God's grace." This shows *mujahidah* (effort) is the work of man and the work of man cannot possibly be the cause of his salvation. It, therefore, follows that salvation and emancipation can be attained by God's grace not by one's effort.

The following verses support this viewpoint:

"When Allah desires to guide a man aright, He illuminates his soul with the light of Islam. When He desires to lead a man astray, He contracts his heart to narrowness." [6:125]

Allah has also said:

"He bestows kingship upon whom He pleases; and takes away kingship from whom He pleases."

This shows how Divine Will overrides individual effort. If effort was the cause of success, Iblis would not have been condemned. If, on the other hand, lack of effort was the cause of success, Adam would not have been blessed. So success depends on grace and not effort. The rule is not, that he who works harder is closer to Allah, but that he who is favoured more gets closer to God. An ascetic engaged in worship in solitude may be farther from the Lord, and a sinner in the tavern may be closer to Him. The best thing in the world is the faith of a child, who is not subject to religious law, likewise a mad man (*majnun*). So when the greatest bounties of the Almighty are not dependent on effort, how can the smaller ones depend on it? These are the various view points.

But I Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi maintain that the difference between the two points of view is verbal (not real). For one says:

"He who tried, succeeded."

And the other says:

"He who succeeded, tried."

It is true that trying is the prerequisite of success. But it is equally true that success is the result of effort. Sometimes one makes an effort to gain *mushahidah*, and while there are cases when Allah's grace precedes effort. As a matter of fact, effort (*mujahidah*) is possible only by Allah's grace (*taufiq*). Allah's grace is as much a prerequisite of man's ability to worship as is the ability to worship a prerequisite for Allah's grace. Similarly *mushahidah* (contemplation) depends upon *mujahidah* (effort) as much as *mujahidah* on *mushahidah*.

It is the flash of Divine Bounty which guides man to make an effort. That being the case, grace can easily be regarded as a prerequisite of effort.

As regards the argument of Sahl and his companions, to the effect that he who denies the necessity of effort denies the validity of all the prophets and their books and religious injunctions, which lay stress on effort, it is not correct, since, in the final analysis, effort is the result of Divine Grace. Effort counts only as a feeble gesture on the part of man and not a guiding principle for Divine Union. Allah Almighty has said:

"Even if We sent angels to them, or make the dead speak to them and bring before their eyes the whole history of the past, they would not believe unless Allah had so willed" [6:111]

This is because the real cause of belief (in God) is His Will and not seeing angels or speaking to the dead and so on and so forth. Allah has also said:

"You may warn the infidels or not, they are not going to believe."[2:6]

This is because no amount of persuasion will succeed unless He ordains it, and that the advent of the prophets and books is only the means and not an end in themselves. The end, or the real cause is Divine Grace. Look at the two persons Abu Bakr and Abu Jahl who were equally recipients of Divine warnings through the Prophet (s.a.w.); but while Abu Bakr succeeded by virtue of warning coupled with Divine Grace (*fadhl*), Abu Jahl failed due to warning not being coupled with Divine Grace. Therefore the cause of success is Divine Grace and not effort. If effort had been the cause of success all the seekers would have been successful. But that is not the case. There are so many seekers who are constantly restless. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said:

"He who makes two days equal is a great loser."

That is to say he who does not try to better his position every day in the scale of Divine nearness is a great loser, since the seeker should be in a better position every day. This is what is meant by a seeker. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said:

"Persevere and do not waver."

Although here also effort is regarded as the cause of success, yet it is only in the sense of a feeble gesture on the part of the seeker. But effort can by no means be regarded as the cause of Divine Union.

Some people argue that it is through effort that the horse is tamed and transformed. They fail to realise that the capacity of reformation is dormant in the nature of the horse and is achievable through effort and training. But no amount of effort and training can transform an ass into a horse, as it lacks that capacity. You can neither convert an ass into a horse nor

a horse into an ass by effort, simply because it involves a change in the very nature of things, and it is impossible to change the nature of things. How can it apply to the Creator Himself, when it is not applicable to the creation.

There is no denying the fact that Sahl Tustari did undergo a kind of *mujahidah* (struggle), but it was of verbal nature only, and the people who indulged in theories and abstained from practice made much of it for nothing. Theory can never replace practice. Undoubtedly the element of effort is there in the case of all the Friends of Allah, but no one regards it as the cause of Divine Nearness, because it is wrong to think so.

Therefore, those who disregard effort do not really negate it, but simply do not attach any importance to it, because it is unworthy of a servant of Allah to attribute success to self-effort rather than Divine Grace. They are firm on the belief that effort is the attribute of the servant and Grace the attribute of the Almighty. Man's effort does not bear fruit unless it is watered by Divine Grace. My dear man, do you not feel embarrassed when you try to attribute success to yourself and deny the part played by the Almighty? The fact of the matter is that effort on the part of the Friends of Allah is in reality the act of Allah Himself forced on them without their being conscious of it. And that force (*qahr*) on the part of the Almighty is really nothing but favour.

But the efforts on the part of the ignorant is of their own doing and is the source of worries and frustration. So never attribute any effort to yourself, nor should you obey the dictates of your lower self (*nafs*) which is the greatest veil between you and your Creator. Some of your deeds act as veils and some tend to lift the veil. So the best thing is complete surrender (*fana* of *nafs*), and unless you resort to this you cannot be worthy of Divine Beauty (*liqa*) since your *nafs* is like a wild dog which can only be subdued by thrashing.

It is related that once Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj went to Kufah and stayed in the house of Shaikh Muhammad bin Hussain Alwi. Ibrahim Khawas also happened to go to Kufah during that time and went to see him. Hallaj said, "what have you gained during the forty years of Sufi life?" Khawas said, "My gain is this that I am firm in *tawakkal* (trust in God)." Hussain said, "By God! You have wasted two lives in the purification of your soul. Where is *fana* in unification (*tauhid*)?" That is to say he had wasted forty years in gaining *tawakkal* which was only the half journey; and that he required another forty years to gain *fana* which was the real goal in Sufism. That is what is meant by wasting two lives.

Shaikh Abu Ali Siah of Merv says, "I saw my *nafs* (lower self) exactly like myself; and somebody came and catching him by the hair handed him over to me. I tied him to a tree and wanted to kill him. He said, 'Abu Ali do not be angry. I am Allah's army and you cannot finish me'."

Muhammad bin Ulyan Naswi, who is one of the elderly disciples of Junaid said, "Having been aware of the mischief of *nafs* and its forces soon after I was initiated in Sufism, I used to look down upon it in sheer hatred. Once I saw that something like a young fox came out

of my throat, and I came to know through Allah's grace that it was my *nafs*. I immediately knocked it down and started kicking it. But with every kick that I administered it grew bigger. I said, 'What is the matter, everything in the world grows weaker under the weight of kicks and blows, but thou art getting stronger.' It said, 'This is because perversion is my nature. What is pain to others is pleasure to me, and what is pleasure to others is pain to me'."

Shaikh Abul Abbas Shaqani, who is regarded as the *Imam* of his time says, "Once when I came to my house I saw a dog of yellow colour sleeping on my bed. I thought it had come from outside, and as I went forward to scare it away, it crept into my garment and disappeared."

Shaikh Abul Qasim Gorgani who is the *Qutub* of the modern age (may he live long) said that he saw his *nafs* in the form of a snake in his earlier days of the spiritual journey. Another dervish said he saw his *nafs* in the form of a rat, and said, "Who art thou?" It said, "I am the destroyer of the negligent (*ghafilin*) for I invite them to evil; and I am the saviour of the friends of Allah since I save them from being misled by their arrogance. When they look at their own deeds of piety they are proud of them. But when they look at me they come to know their faults and reform themselves."

All this shows that *nafs* is a reality and not an attribute (*sifat*), and that its attributes are clearly perceptible. The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "The greatest of thy enemies is thy *nafs* lying between thy two sides. When you recognise its mischief you can easily tame it through spiritual discipline. But you cannot change its nature. So the best thing is to know its mischief. Once you are aware of its mischief, you need not worry about it." Someone has rightly said, "*Nafs* is a fierce dog whose taming through discipline is perfectly justified." This shows that spiritual discipline is meant to subdue its wild attributes (*nafs*) and not to destroy its reality.

Now I will say something about the nature of lust and the ways of combating it.

The Nature of Lust (*Hawa*)

You must know that according to some shaikhs, lust (*hawa*) is one of the attributes of *nafs*, while other maintain that it is a natural instinct controlled by *nafs* just as the human soul is controlled by intelligence. The soul which is not aided by intelligence is weak. Similarly, the *nafs* which is not aided by lust is weak.

So man is constantly subjected to two pulls in the opposite direction. One from the side of the intelligence (*aql*) and the other from lust (*hawa*). If the former is stronger he lands in the realm of spiritual prosperity; if the latter gets the upper hand he ends up in heresy and destruction. Therefore lust is a veil and man is commanded to disregard it.

A shaikh has said, "He who accepts it is annihilated and he who rejects it reigns." Allah Almighty has said, "He who feared God and resisted the dictates of *nafs* found his place in

paradise." And the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "The greatest fear which I have about my *ummah* is surrender to lust (*ittibaa nafs*) and constant ambition (*tulul aml*)." Allah has also said, "There are people who regard their passions as deity." Ibn Abbas has said in his *tafsir* (commentary) that, the phrase "regarding passions as deity" means that they worship their passions as they should have worshipped God. How miserable is he who worships his passions, and exerts all his powers to obey them and be a slave of them!

Passions are of two kinds: passion for eating, drinking and sex, and passion for power and position. He who yields to the former resorts to wine-houses and mankind is free from his mischief. But he who is the slave of the latter is a terror for mankind. He is misguided and tries to misguide others. May God save us from him.

Says Ibrahim Khawas, "There was a monk in Rum who was living in solitude for seventy years. Once I went to see him. As I approached him he opened the window and said, 'O Ibrahim! I know why you have come here. I am sitting here not because I have taken to asceticism, but because my *nafs* is like a ferocious dog and I am here to prevent it from harming the people.' When I heard this I said, 'O Lord! How powerful art Thou to have shown the way of righteousness to an infidel.' Hearing this he said, 'O Ibrahim, how long will you seek for men. Go and seek yourself. And when you find it, guard it from lust which comes in three hundred and sixty robes of piety to deceive mankind and lead it to destruction.' "

Satan dare not enter man's heart and lead him astray unless he detects a streak of lust therein, and decorates it to ensnare you. This is what we call *waswas* (satanic suggestions). But it originates from lust.

When Satan vowed that he will mislead all mankind, Allah said to him, "But you will not be able to mislead my servants." [15:42]. So Satan is, in reality, man's *nafs* (lower self) or lust. That is the reason why the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "There is none who is immune from being overpowered by his *shaytan* (Satan) except Umar who has overpowered his *shaytan*." That is to say everybody is overpowered by his passions except Umar who has gained mastery over his passions. This shows lust is ingrained in the very nature of Adam, and is a source of pleasure to mankind.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "Passion and sensuality are ingrained in the nature of mankind." Renunciation of lust turns you into a prince while surrender to it turns you into a prisoner. Zulaikha was a princess. She yielded to lust and became a prisoner. But Yusuf who was a prisoner renounced it and became a prince. When Junaid was asked, "What is union (with God)?" He said, "It is renunciation of lust." He who desires to be favoured with union with God, should oppose the dictates of his *nafs*.

Dhunnun of Egypt said, "I saw a *darwesh* flying in the air and asked him how he did it. He said, 'I put my foot on *hawa* [lust] and got into *hawa* [also means air]'; that is to say he subdued his lower self and had the ability to fly."

Muhammad bin Fadhl al-Balkhi says, "I am surprised to see one who goes for *hajj* with lust (*hawa*) concealed in his heart, and visits the House of God (Ka'bah) but he does not trample over his *hawa* (lust) in order to be able to see God Himself."

But the most apparent of vices of the lower self is passion (*shahwat*) which lies penetrated in all the limbs and organs of man. The passion of the eyes is the desire to see, the passion of the ears is the desire to hear, the passion of the nose is the desire to smell, the passion of the mouth is to taste, the passion of the body is the desire to feel and take rest, and the passion of the mind is to think. The seeker of God is, therefore duty-bound to exercise strict control over himself to work hard day and night to keep his passions under control, refrain from being overambitious, and to pray to God that he is spared the mischief of his lower self. For he who is overmastered by his passions is veiled from God and is ruined.

But as it takes a long time to suppress each and every passion, the best way to get rid of it is submission (*taslim*) to God. It is said that once Abu Ali Siah of Merv went to a bathroom with a razor to shave the hidden hair when suddenly the thought came to his mind, "I should cut off this part which is the source of all lust". As soon as this idea came to his mind a voice from above said, "O Abu Ali, how can you interfere in Our Kingdom? Is any limb of yours out of Our control? If you do that, I swear by My glory that I will put hundreds of passions in every hair of your body."

Man has no power to change his nature, but he can change his habits by total submission to the Almighty and by seeking His help in all matters of life. When he submits to God he comes directly under Divine protection and succeeds in warding off the impending calamity better than by his own effort. The flies can be driven away with a fly-net better than a fan. God's protection is the remedy of all calamities and the best cure of all ailments. God is the Sovereign of the universe, and man is just a pawn in His hand. God has said, "There is none to challenge My authority." No amount of effort on man's part can bring about success without His consent. Man's effort cannot succeed unless all success is predestined. He cannot even worship God by effort. Effort is of two kinds: Either he tries to change God's will or tries to accomplish something by his own effort. But both of the propositions are absurd. For, neither God's will can be changed nor can anything happen without His will. Once Shaikh Abu Bakr Shibli fell ill. The doctors advised him to be abstinent. He said, "What should I abstain from? Should I abstain from what is predestined for me or from what is not? If I abstain from what is in my destiny, it is impossible. If I abstain from what is not destined for me it is of no use." Someone has said, "*Mushahidah* (seeing) is not possible without *mujahidah* (effort)."

Commentary: This brings us to the crucial question of predestination and free will. Although the author has promised here to discuss the question in detail later on, it can be briefly summed up as follows: It is related in the annals of the prophets

that once Prophet Moses met the Devil and said to him had he not refused to bow before Adam he would not have been damned forever. The Devil said, "What could I do? It was my destiny." The Prophet said, "Did you know that?" The Devil replied, "No." "Then it is your fault," the Prophet said. It transpires from what Moses said that all actions on the part of man without prior knowledge of what is written in his fate are his actions based on his free will. When somebody kills his enemy he does so because of the feelings of vengeance or hatred against him and not because of the fact that it was so written in his fate. Since he did not know about it. This shows that the truth lies not in predestination alone or free will alone. It is both. That is why when Hadhrat Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq was asked about it, he said, "*Al Amro bainal Amrain*" (The truth lies in between the two). He is also reported to have said, "Man can do what he wills, but cannot will what he wills."

However, there are some *ulama* who opine that predestination reported to have been written down in the preserved tablet (*lauh-i-mahfooz*) is nothing but eternal knowledge of God about man's actions in future, and does not mean His will or command.

Section

The Hakimiyah School

This school of thought originated from Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Ali al-Hakim Tirmidhi who was one of the *Imams* of his time so far as the exoteric and esoteric sciences of Islam are concerned. He is the author of many books mostly dealing with the reality of *walayat* (sainthood) in which he has also discussed various degrees of sainthood and status of the saints (*auliya*). This by itself is a vast subject. It is like a limitless ocean.

He begins with saying that God Almighty has certain friends who are His chosen people and saved from being contaminated by the vices of the world and falling a victim to their passions and lust. Moreover, he has indicated the various positions (*maqamat*) and degrees (*darjat*) of the Friends of God and stated their characteristics. Although this is a very vast subject, I will try to bring out the salient features of his research so that the reader can understand it.

Affirmation of *Walayat*

You should know that the very basis of Sufism (*tasawwuf*) and *ma'rifat* (gnosis) is *walayat* which all the *mashaikh* (plural of *shaikh*) are agreed although their ways of expression are different.

The speciality of Hakim Ali Tirmidhi's research is the establishment of the connection between *walayat* and *tariqat* (Sufism). This word is spelled in two ways; *walayat* and *wilayat*. Etymologically *walayat* means the ability to perform supernatural deeds; and wilayat means temporal authority. Both of these words are derived from the same root '*wala*', but have different meanings. It is like '*dalalat*' and '*dilalat*'. While the former means 'to indicate' the latter stands for 'being proud'.

The word *walayat* also means "overlordship" as God has said:

"Overlordship is Allah's attribute." [18:44]

This verse has been revealed to reject the claim of the infidels on *walayat*. *Walayat* also means love (friendship). In that case the word *wali* is based on the root '*fa'el*' in the 'objective case', as said by God, "*Wa huwa yatallassalihin*" (And He protects the pious). It may also be justified to take the word *wali* in the "subjective case." In that case '*wali*' would mean a person who loves God and has full trust in Him. In this latter case the '*wali*' is called '*murid*' (the seeker). But in the former case he would be called '*murad*' (the sought).

Commentary: In Sufism the words *murid* and *murad* have spectacular significance. *Murid* is regarded as one who seeks God, and the *murad* is one who is sought by God. In other words *murid* stands for a lover and *murad* for beloved. This distinction is based on two different *ayat* of the Holy Qur'an which have been quoted elsewhere.

Both of these interpretations of the subjective and objective cases are supported by the Qur'anic verses. Says God in the Holy Qur'an:

"Beware! Allah's assistance is available to the believers." [7:196]

He has also said, "The infidels have no protector" which means He is the Protector of the believers in every respect e.g. in enabling them to understand the Qur'anic verses and knowing the inner esoteric significance thereof, and understanding the mysteries of the universe, as well as helping them to resist the bare tendencies of the lower self and of Satan. God's help may also include the fact of loving His servants and bringing them close to Himself and saving them from perversion. Says Allah:

"He loves them and they love Him." [5:57]

So that they are prevented from loving the world and the worldly people. This is what is meant by this phrase, "He loves them and they love Him."

Walayat may also include the ability to worship God without any fear of opposition and distraction, and also the ability to resist the dictates of Satan and of the lower self. *Walayat* may also consist in the conferring on the seeker the authority to rule, the power to decide and the distinction of his prayers being answered, as said by the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), "There are many servants of God with dirty hair and torn clothes whose prayers are acceptable if only they swear by God."

It is a well known fact that during the reign of Umar the river Nile went dry because according to the old custom of paganism, it would flow only when a beautifully decorated maiden was flung into it as an offering. Hadhrat Umar wrote on a piece of paper saying, "O river, if thou hast stopped flowing on thy own will, do not flow. But if thou has stopped by the order of God Almighty, Umar tells thee to flow." When this paper was thrown in the river it started flowing. This is *walayat* in the real sense. What I mean is this, that a *wali* is he who possesses these qualifications not as a matter of *kal* (theory), but *hal* (spiritual experience).

Many *mashaikh* have compiled books on the subject of *walayat* which are now extinct. I will now try to revive them in this book so that the seekers of Truth may benefit from it by the grace of Allah Almighty.

Section

You must know (may God bless you), that the word "*wali*" is very common among the people as well as in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.). Says Allah in the Holy Qur'an, "Beware, the *auliya-Allah* (Friends of God) are such that for them there is neither fear nor grief." [10:63]. He has also said, "We are your *auliya* (friends), in this world and in the next." [41:31]. At another place, He says "Allah is the *Wali* of those who are believers." [2:257].

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "There are such servants of Allah who are envied even by the prophets and martyrs." When the companions asked who they were so that they might love them, he replied that, "They love one another purely for God's sake and without any consideration of material gains. Their faces will glow with light of faith and they will be seated on the pulpits of *Nur* (Divine light). They will be without fear and grief when all men will be steeped in fear and grief." Then he recited the verse, "Beware the Friends of Allah are such that they need not fear nor grieve."[10:63]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said, "Allah says he who hurts His friend (*wali*) declares war against Him." This is because Allah Almighty has chosen some good people and bestowed upon them the honour of friendship. These are the people whom he has selected to act as His vicegerent on earth. And it is through them that God manifests His powers in the world by bestowing upon them ability to perform supernatural deeds. For, He

purifies them from contamination of the lower selves, and corruption of the people of vile and vulgar nature, by virtue of which they aspire for nothing but Him and love nothing but Him. The Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) have been in existence in the past, they are still there and will continue to be in the world till the Day of Resurrection since Allah Almighty has favoured the Muslim *ummah* with the unique distinction of being the best of all *ummahs*, and has guaranteed the security of the religion of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) for as long as the universe lasts.

Now, since the validity of orthodox theology of Islam continues to be upheld and safeguarded by the *ulama*, the task of preserving the spiritual heritage of Islam has been entrusted to the saints of Islam (*auliya-Allah*) who have to face the opposition of two schools of thoughts, the Mu'tazilah and the Hashwiyah (Anthropomorphists). While the former deny the superiority of one person over another, thereby hurting the superiority of the prophets over the rest of mankind, which amounts to heresy, the latter do recognise the principle of superiority, but maintain that it existed only in the past, but is non-existent now. But it makes no difference, for acceptance of superiority in the past and its denial in the future is one and the same thing.

Allah Almighty has, therefore, upheld the validity of prophethood for good, and has done so through the continuity of the class of his chosen people called *auliya-Allah* who are God's vicegerents on earth, and are fully devoted to Him without the slightest interference of the lower beastly self. It is through the spiritual *barakah* (blessings) of the *auliya* that Allah (God) sends rain from the skies, grows vegetation from the earth and grants success to the Muslims over the infidels. There are four thousand in number but they are hidden from the gaze of the common people; and even they themselves do not know one another. In fact, they are not aware of their own spiritual capabilities and virtues. In short they remain hidden not only from mankind but from themselves as well. Their existence stands confirmed not only by the Qur'an and Hadith, but actual experience of the *auliya-Allah* as well, including myself, by the grace of God.

Those who are entrusted the duty of administration are three hundred in number and are known as *Akhyar*. There are forty more who are called *Abdal*, and seven more known as *Abrar*, and four more known as *Autad*, and three more known as *Naqibs* (*Noquba*), and one more who is called *Qutub* or *Ghaus*. All these persons know one another and depend on one another in the performance of their duties. Their existence has been confirmed by the Holy Qur'an and Hadith, and by a vast majority of the *ummah* called *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah*. But space does not permit detailed discussion of this topic.

Here, some vulgar persons may raise an objection to my saying that the *auliya-Allah* know one another and also know that they themselves are *auliya-Allah*. "If a *wali* knows that he is a *wali*, then he should be sure of his salvation in the hereafter", these people argue. The answer is that when a *mu'min* (believer) knows that he is a believer and is still not sure of his salvation, in the same manner a *wali* who knows that he is a *wali* but he can not be sure about his salvation. It may happen that God in His grace, may

reveal to him that he will be emancipated and that there is nothing for him to fear in the hereafter. But the *mashaikh* are divided on this issue. And I know the reason why their opinions are divided.

As I said above, every one of the said four thousand hidden saints think that he is not a *wali*, while the people of the second category think that they are *auliya-Allah*. Moreover, many jurists of Islam too are of the opinion that a *wali* knows that he is a *wali*. But there are many scholastics like Abu Ishaq Asfrani together with a group of the earlier Sufis who maintain that a *wali* does not know that he is a *wali* while people like Abu Bakr bin Faruk think that they do. I ask them what is the harm if he knows that he is a *wali*. They think that if a *wali* knows that he is a *wali*, he becomes a victim of arrogance or self-conceit. My reply is that the very fact that he is a *wali* is enough to entitle him for Divine protection and he cannot possibly fall prey to arrogance or conceit. There is, however, a very remote possibility that a *wali* who is performing miracles should think that he is not a *wali*, or these miracles are not miracles. Both of these views find support from many commoners whose opinion does not carry any weight.

But the Mu'tazilah are definitely against superiority of one Muslim over another. They are also against the very possibility of miracles without knowing that the very basis of *walayat* (sainthood) is superiority and miracles. They are of the view that all Muslims are Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) because they obey God. They allege that he who believes in God, but does not believe in His attributes, and he who believes that a wicked Muslim will always remain in Hell, and he who believes more in rationalism rather then revelation is a *wali*. I agree he is a *wali*. But he is a *wali* of *shaytan* (Satan), and not a *wali* of God. Moreover the Mu'tazilah say that if miracles were a part of *walayat*, every Muslim would have performed miracles, because belief in God is a common factor among them. But when they are agreed in principle, they should agree in details too. They also believe that both the believers (*mu'min*) and nonbelievers (*kafir*) can perform miracles. For according to them it is a miracle if a hungry person is given food in the desert or is offered a camel to ride, and so on. They say if it was possible to travel hundreds of miles in a single night, why did the Prophet (s.a.w.), not enjoy this privilege when he was going to Makkah and was told by the Almighty, "The animals carry your weight to a city where you reach after great difficulty." [16:7]. My reply is that God has also said in the same Qur'an, "Glory be to Allah who enabled his servant (Prophet) to travel from the Holy Mosque of Makkah to the Holy Mosque of Jerusalem in a single night." [17:1].

The reason why the possibility of miracle has been denied in the former verse is that on the previous occasion the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) was travelling with a large number of people. Whereas a miracle is a privilege vouchsafed for the chosen few. If it had been made common to all the very foundation of religion based on faith in the unseen (*ghaib*) would have been disrupted, for religion is a thing applicable to all while miracles are a speciality of sainthood (*walayat*) only. Therefore, when it was a general question of transportation of a crowd of people, the journey to Makkah was an arduous task, but when the journey was the concern of the Prophet alone (s.a.w.) it was performed

miraculously, and he reached Jerusalem from Makkah overnight; whereafter he was transported to *Qaba Qausain* (two bows distance from Divine presence), was vouchsafed the knowledge of Divine mysteries and returned home before the night was over. This shows that the general principles of religion are applicable to the common people, while miracles are the speciality of the chosen, and it is not right to deny it. It is like a king's kingdom in which there are different kinds of servants of which some are the minister of state, some are high ranking officials and some are ordinary workers such as cooks, and sweepers. You cannot deny the principle of superiority of the one over the other. The same holds good in case of the kingdom of God Almighty in which some are *mu'mins*, some are sinners, some are *ulama*, and some are ignorant. So denial of the principle of speciality or superiority is the denial of the very principle of religion.

Section

Various Sufi shaikhs have described different mysteries and meanings of *walayat*. I will now try to explain them as far as possible for the benefit of the readers; may it please Allah Almighty.

Says Abu Ali Jurjani, "A *wali* is he who enjoys both intoxication of the wine of Divine Unity (*fana*) and sobriety (*baqa*) of the vision of Divine Beauty, simultaneously, without being conscious of himself nor satisfied with anything other than the Divine Beloved."

This is because the seeker retains his identity so long as he is not lost in the ocean of Divinity. But when he is lost in the ocean like a drop he is oblivious of himself. He cannot rest with anything other than God to whom he may reveal his secret, because if he says anything about himself it will be nothing but giving out Divine secrets which are unworthy of being disclosed to any one except the Beloved Himself. Moreover it is not possible to be aware of anything in Divine Union except the Divine Being, in which case he cannot rest with other than God when everything other than God has ceased to exist for him.

Junaid says, "*Wali* is he who has nothing to fear, for fear is the result of non-attainment of one's desire or loss of hope. But a *wali* has neither any desire nor hope to aspire except for the desire to meet the Divine Beloved. A *wali* is concerned with the present time only and has no future to hope for and nothing to pine for except God Almighty. Similarly a *wali* has no grief, since grief is the result of misfortunes. But how can he regard himself as unfortunate when he is in the midst of Divine blessings drenched in Divine Grace and drowned in the feelings of gratitude, and is face to face with Divine Beauty. Allah Almighty says:

"Beware! *Auliya-Allah* (Friends of God) are such who need not fear nor be grieved." [10:62].

A commoner may think that when there is no fear and grief, nor hope, one must be immune from the fear of the Day of Resurrection too (which belief is un-Islamic). But

that is not the case. They do not feel secure from the fear of accountability on the Day of Resurrection, for, nobody knows what is in store for him in the hereafter. Moreover, security comes only when one feels that he is safe from the mischief of his *nafs* (*bashriyat*) or the lower self. But the loss of fear, grief and hope (mentioned in the Holy Qur'an) as one of the characteristics of a *wali*, is something different. It is the result of annihilation of the lower self. When the lower self (*nafs*) is annihilated, *ridha* (pleasure of God) becomes his characteristic. And this is *walayat*.

Abu Uthman Maghrabi says, "A *wali* may become a celebrity but he is never misguided or led astray." That is to say reputation does not make him arrogant or self-conceited. It is also said, "A *wali* is hidden (*mastur*) and may not become famous. This is because fame brings trouble, and he refrains from being famous." But according to Abu Uthman, a *wali* may be famous but fame may not bring bad name to him because bad name is the result of falsehood, and since a *wali* is far from falsehood, he does not get a bad name. *Walayat* and falsehood are contradiction in terms. This ends the controversy that a *wali* is not conscious of his *walayat*. If he is, he becomes famous and when he becomes famous he incurs disgrace.

It is said that once Ibrahim bin Adham asked a person, "Do you wish to become a *wali*?" He said, "Yes, I do." The shaikh said, "Detach yourself from everything in this world and the next, devote yourself completely to God and concentrate upon Him alone." This is because attachment to the world which is transitory (*fani*) tantamounts to detachment from God who is everlasting (*baqi*); and attachment with the hereafter which is lasting is detachment from God who is also lasting. Therefore, while attachment with the transitory world ends with the end of the world, attachment with the hereafter which is lasting, does not come to an end, and is, therefore, more dangerous than attachment with the transitory world. So the best thing is to refrain from both this world and the hereafter and devote yourself completely to God. And this is what we call *walayat*.

Somebody asked Abu Yazid as to what *walayat* is, he said, "A *wali* is he who accepts courageously what is commanded and rejects what is prohibited." This is because the more a man loves God, the greater is his respect for His commands.

Shaikh Abu Yazid has also said, "Once I heard that one of the *auliya-Allah* was living in a city. I went to see him. When I reached his mosque he came out of his house and spat on the floor of the mosque. Seeing this I turned away from him without saying *assalamu alaikum* because, I thought a person who had no respect for the mosque could not be a *wali*. The same night I saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in dream saying to me 'O Abu Yazid, you have received God's blessings for what you did'. The next day I got the status which you see."

Once a man went to see Shaikh Abu Saeed sitting in his mosque. While entering the mosque he put his left foot first in it. The shaikh turned him out saying that he had nothing to do with a man who did not know how to enter the house of God.

But there is a section of the heretics who maintain that worship is necessary only to achieve *walayat*, and when it is achieved, worship is no longer necessary. This view is definitely un-Islamic. For, at no stage of spiritual progress can any of the commands of God be abrogated. I will deal with this at some length later on.

On Miracles (*Karamat*)

Know that the possibility of supernatural deeds on the part of a *wali* cannot be ruled out so long as he abides by the laws of *shariat*. The *ulama* of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* are unanimous on this point, nor is it logically untenable because miracles fall within the purview of predestination and can, on no account, be considered as alien to *shariat* (Muslim law). *Karamat* (miracle) is one of the signs of the *wali's* veracity (*sadaqat*), and is not vouchsafed to an impostor, except that he is exposed by making a false claim to it.

Supernatural deeds are valid only when the saint abides by the laws of *shariat*, and true miracles are distinguishable from the fake ones. (i.e. occultism and magic). The *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* believe in *karamat* but not to the extent of miracles or *mu'jizat* (which is vouchsafed to the prophets only). An example of which is, your prayer being accepted or your desire being fulfilled and the like of it, while a *mu'jizat*, they believe, is much more.

My reply is that if a supernatural deed takes place at the hands of a *wali* who is strict in the observance of the laws of *shariat* what is wrong with it? If they maintain that it is not within God's powers, it is a heretical belief; if they think that it is in God's power but it amounts to stepping in the shoes of prophethood, it is illogical, since there is no difference between *mu'jizat* and *karamat* except that the former is attributed to the prophets and the latter to the saints (*auliya*).

Karamat of a *wali* is objectionable only when it is accompanied by a claim to prophethood. But when a *wali* is regarded as a *wali* and a prophet as a prophet, without mixing of the two offices, there is no harm in it. This is because superiority of the prophets depends on the excellence of their position and height of their status and not on the performance of supernatural deeds (*karamat*) or miracles (*mu'jizat*).

Commentary: 1) When miracles are performed by one who does not abide by *shariat*, the same may be attributed to occultism, black magic and jins and the like.

2) The Sunnis have drawn a line of demarcation between *karamat* and *mu'jizat* both of which fall within the province of supernatural deeds. The supernatural deeds performed by the prophets are called *mu'jizat* and those performed by saints are called *karamat*.

All the schools of Islam are unanimous on the fact that miracles are common to all the prophets, but they vary in accordance with their respective status. When that much is acceptable, with regard to the prophets, what is the harm in accepting that a prophet also differs from a *wali* by virtue of his position although the incidence of miracle is common to both.

When the superiority of the prophets, over one another does not depend on miracles, and when one prophet can be superior in status to another, despite the commonality of miracles, a *wali* can also be inferior to a prophet despite commonality of miracles. If, however, somebody thinks that a *wali* (saint) may claim to be a prophet by virtue of his power of performing miracles, the answer is that it is impossible because a *wali* cannot be a liar.

If a saint who has the power to work miracles claims to be a prophet the very validity of his miracle becomes questionable and he becomes a *kafir* (heretic) since real *karamat* (miracle) is vouchsafed to none except a true believer (*mu'min*). An impostor cannot be a *mu'min* (i.e. Muslim). Thus *karamat* is as much a sign of a *wali*'s veracity as *mu'jizat* is the sign of a prophet's veracity (*sidq*).

There is no justification in doubting a prophet's prophethood and a *wali*'s *walayat* (sainthood), because prophethood is confirmed by the prophet's *mu'jizat* and a *wali*'s *walayat* is confirmed by his sainthood. Thus a *wali* is sincere in his *walayat* and a *nabi* (prophet) in his *nabuwwat* (prophethood). Moreover, the *wali*'s *karamat* is nothing but the result of his *nabi's nabuwwat*. Therefore a *wali*'s *karamat* should augment our faith in the prophet's veracity rather than damage it because there is no contradiction between them to negate each other. The claim of one is the proof of the other. In *shariat* too when the claim of a group of people is similar, if the claim of one is established, the claim of the whole group is automatically established by virtue of the unanimity of their claim. But when their claims are contradictory, proof of the claim of one does not established the claim of the other. So when a prophet's claim on his prophethood is established by virtue of his miracle which is also confirmed by the saint's *karamat*, the possibility of doubt vanishes. God knows better.

The Difference between *Mu'jizat* and *Karamat*.

When we have seen that *mu'jizat* and *karamat* cannot be performed by an impostor, it is now our duty to go into the matter deeper and find out the difference between the two. It must be understood that the governing principle of religion is that the *mu'jizat* of the prophet should be proclaimed while the *wali*'s *karamat* should be kept secret. This is because the prophet's *mu'jizat* is meant for others, while the saint's *karamat* is his personal affair. Moreover, the prophet knows for certain that it is a miracle, but the *wali* does not know if it is a miracle or a deception (*istadraj*). Another difference is that the prophet has the authority to formulate the religious law in the positive and negative

sense, while the *wali* cannot but submit to the Divine Law, since a *wali*'s *karamat* can in no way, contradict the commands of religion. Here somebody may say that when a *mu'jizat* is a supernatural deed which establishes the veracity of a prophet, and *karamat* is also a supernatural deed worked by a non-prophet, then *karamat* of a *wali* is automatically nullified since it becomes an ordinary affair (*muatad*). The reply is that when *karamat* is the performance of a *wali* which itself is the outcome of the prophet's *mu'jizat,* how can a *wali*'s *karamat* nullify the prophet's *mu'jizat*. On the contrary, it gives additional strength to it. When a Muslim called Khubaib was being hanged in Makkah, the Prophet (s.a.w.), who was in Madinah came to know of it and told his companion what was happening at Makkah. God lifted the veil from Khubaib also. He saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and wished *salaam* to him. God Almighty enabled the Prophet (s.a.w.) to hear his *salaam* and pray for him; and also enabled Khubaib to hear the Prophet's *salaam* in reply. So the Prophet's act of seeing Khubaib at Makkah was as much a supernatural deed as was Khubaib's act of seeing the Prophet (s.a.w.) at Madinah. This was knowledge of the unseen in space (from Makkah to Madinah). Similarly there can be no difference in time for the generations which came after the Prophet (s.a.w.). The difference in time and space does not matter, it may be Khubaib's *karamat* who was absent from the Prophet in space or it may be the *karamat* of the later generations who will be absent from the Prophet in time.

This is a definite proof of the fact that there is no conflict between *karamat* and *mu'jizat* since *karamat* is not possible unless it is corroborated by the Prophet's *mu'jizat* and unless it is worked by a *mu'min* (true believer). This is because *karamat* on the part of the *ummah* is the *mu'jizat* of the Prophet (s.a.w.). So long as the *ummah* lasts, the proof of its veracity, for example the power to work miracles, will also last in his *ummah*.

In other words the *auliya* bear testimony to the validity of the Prophet's prophethood, and none except the true believers (*mu'min*) can bear testimony. This can be appropriately understood by the following story of Ibrahim Khawas.

Ibrahim Khawas says, "I went out in a desert in my usual mood of living in solitude. After sometime a man appeared out of the blues and asked for companionship. When I looked at him closely I felt some hatred against him. Seeing this he said, 'O Ibrahim your worry is correct. I am a Christian monk and wish to accompany you.' Having known that he was an alien (in faith) I felt a bit satisfied and allowed him to come with me. I told him I had nothing to eat and drink and that he might have to suffer on that account. He said, 'O Ibrahim thy fame is great in the world and still you are worrying about food and drink.' I was amazed to see his state of satisfaction and agreed to accompany him to see how far he could abide by his words and bear the hardships of the journey. After seven days we felt extremely thirsty. He got up and said, 'O Ibrahim I heard so many trumpets of your friendship with God in the world. Now bring me water. I cannot do without it.' I lowered my head to the ground and said, 'O my Lord, do not disgrace us in front of a non-Muslim who thinks I can perform miracles.' When I raised my head I saw a dish with two loaves of bread and two bowls of water. We satisfied our

hunger and thirst and went further. After seven more days I thought I should test him so that he would realise his incompetence and be put to shame. I said 'O monk, now it is your turn. Let us see how far your prayers can help us.' He too lowered his head to the ground and prayed. When he raised his head we saw a dish with four loaves and four cups full of water. I was surprised to see this, and felt slighted thinking that I should not partake it since it was meant for a heretic. When he invited me to share it, I refused saying that, since he was not worthy of it, it could not be his miracle and was from a source other than God since miracles are not vouchsafed to the heretics. He said, 'Come on Ibrahim have it, I give you two happy tidings. The first is that I accept Islam' and he recited the *Kalimah Shahadat*: *La ilaha ilallaho Muhammadur Rasul Allah* (There is no god but God and Muhammad is the true prophet of God). 'The second news is that you are a genuine saint of God.' I said, 'How is that?' He said, 'I know we people are incapable of such miracles. However, I put my head on the ground out of modesty and said to God Almighty, O Lord, if Islam is the true religion give me two loafs of bread and two cups of water. And if Ibrahim is your friend (*wali*), give me two more loafs and two more cups of water.' Hearing this I shared the gift with him. Later on that monk was initiated into my spiritual order and reached a high spiritual station (*maqam*)."

This shows how the Prophet's miracle is affirmed and manifested at the hands of a *wali* (saint). It is highly improbable that any *wali* be vouchsafed with a miracle without the Prophet's presence or a non-*wali* be vouchsafed with it or *karamat* in the *wali*'s presence. In point of fact, it is not possible for anyone, who is considered to be just a beginner (*mubtadi*) in spiritualism to know the miraculous powers of a prophet except one who has completed the spiritual journey (*muntahi*). Now since the Christian monk was destined to be a saint like the magicians facing Prophet Moses (a.s.), who were finally converted, Allah Almighty graciously vouchsafed him with the power of *karamat* in the same manner in which Ibrahim was vouchsafed to affirm the miracle (*mu'jizat)* of the Prophet (s.a.w.).

This brings out clearly the difference between a *karamat* and *mu'jizat* which is a lengthy subject and cannot be dealt with fully in this small book. *Karamat* when manifested counts as a double *karamat* on the part of a *wali* since it is to be kept secret. My shaikh, however, said that a *wali* who manifests his *karamat* without intention to show off does not suffer. It is bad only when it is displayed arrogantly. God knows better.

Commentary: There are as many degrees of sainthood as there are saints. Broadly speaking there are three main categories of saints: *Mubtadis* (beginners) *Mutawassit* (the middlers) i.e. those who have gone half way, and the *Muntahis* (the finalists i.e. those who have reached the goal). The reason why a *karamat* when manifested becomes a second *karamat* is that one who is allowed to disclose the secret is really an exceptional personality of a higher status.

Manifestation of *Karamat* on the Part of One Who Professes Divinity

All the Sufi shaikhs and *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* are unanimous on the point that a supernatural deed can be possible at the hands of even an infidel so that the possibility of denying the very institution of miracles is completely rooted out, and hypocrisy of the impostor is thereby established. For instance, Pharaoh who lived for four hundred years, was never ill in his life and the waters, would follow him as he climbed heights and would stop when he stopped. But when he claimed to be a god, everyone could see through his mischief because every thinking person knows that God is neither anthropomorphic nor material. The same is the case with Shaddah and Nimrod.

Similarly the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said that Anti-Christ (*Dajjal*) would come and lay claims to Divinity, that two mountains would be moving with him, one on his right representing heaven and the one on the left representing hell, that he would call upon men to believe in him and that those who would not believe would suffer; and that he would cause people to die and come to life again. He will perform many supernatural deeds like that, but no sane person would ever accept him as God because even a child knows that God will not be mounted on an ass, or behave like a crude, ill mannered and foolish person. This sort of power is called *istadraj* (occultism).

Commentary: The reason why hypocrisy of the impostor is established by the incidence of a supernatural deed at his hands, is that everybody knows for certain that miracles and impostors do not go together. The example of Pharaoh given by the author appropriately proves the point in question. They also manifested miracles but laid claims to godship as well. Hence nobody believed in them as their heresy was too obvious.

It is also possible that a person laying false claims to prophethood may have the power to perform supernatural deeds like a genuine prophet. But whereas such extraordinary acts bear testimony to the genuineness of a true prophet, an impostor is recognised as such by these acts. But when a person claims to be a *wali* and also possesses the power to perform supernatural deeds, it is difficult to judge whether he is a genuine saint or not, simply because the possibility of supernatural deeds being genuine cannot be denied.

It is also possible that a false claimant to sainthood may be able to perform such supernatural deeds as are admissible in Islam, but he may not be a saint himself. In that case his miracle will be attributed to the Prophet's veracity and God's grace rather than his own power and ability. While every article of faith in Islam is to be believed blindly (without asking for the reason), in *walayat* (sainthood) everything has to be proved logically, because both impostor and the genuine *wali* have identical beliefs but differ

in deeds, and such the impostor's claim to sainthood cannot be negated by bad deeds in as much as one's *iman* cannot be negated by bad deeds. As a matter of fact, *karamat* and *walayat* are Divine gifts and cannot be acquired by effort. Therefore, he who is rightly guided is guided by God's grace and not by his efforts. I have already said in foregoing pages that the *auliya* (saints) are not sinless (*ma'sum*). It is the prophets who are sinless; the *auliya* are protected (*mahfuz)* not *ma'sum*. They are protected from any calamity which may devastate their *wilayat* (sainthood). And what can devastate *wilayat* can devastate *iman* (faith) as well. And what devastates *iman* is apostasy (*irtad* or to become *murtad*) not sin. This is the viewpoint of Muhammad bin Ali Tirmidhi, Junaid, Abul Hasan Nuri, and Harith Muhasibi etc., may Allah be pleased with them, who are regarded as *Ahli Haqaiq* (gnostics).

However, those who are devoted to special reforms (*Ahli Mu'amilat*) such as Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari, Abu Sulaiman Darani, Abu Hamdun Qassar and others are of the opinion that constant obedience (*ta'at)* is the prerequisite of *wilayat,* and that a *wali* can be deposed from *wilayat* by committing a major sin (*kabira*). But, as I have stated above, *iman* cannot be nullified by a major sin. When *iman* (faith) cannot be nullified by a major sin, how can *wilayat,* which is inferior *to iman*, be nullified by it. This controversy among the *mashaikh* has assumed huge dimensions. My aim here is not to deal with them fully. What is of paramount importance in this respect, is to know whether *karamat* takes place in the state of intoxication (*sukr*), or sobriety (*sahw*), or in the state of ecstasy (*ghalbah*) or self-consciousness (*tamkin*). Quite a lot has been said about intoxication and sobriety in the section dealing with Abu Yazid Bistami.

The shaikhs like Abu Yazid, Dhunnun Misri, Muhammad bin Khafif, Hussain bin Mansur, Yahya bin Muadh Razi and others maintain that *karamat* is possible only in the state of intoxication, and that it is only the *mu'jizat* of the prophet which takes place in the state of sobriety. This is the only difference between *karamat* and *mu'jizat* according to them. They are of the opinion that *karamat* takes place at the hands of a *wali* who is totally intoxicated and cannot attend to the task of guidance. While the prophet who is duty-bound to guide mankind manifests his miracles in the state of sobriety. Moreover, the prophet has the power to show his miraculous powers where necessary or conceal it; but the *wali* has no such choice. Sometimes they wish to perform supernatural deeds but cannot do it, and sometimes they do not like it, but they cannot help it. This is because the *wali* is not duty bound to proclaim religion, for which the state of sobriety is necessary. His mission is secrecy (*maktum*), and is characterised by intoxication. In other words the prophet is a man of law (*shara'*), whereas the *wali* is a man of *satr* (concealment). Therefore *karamat* can only be possible when the *wali* is in complete intoxication and whatever takes place at his hand is actually the result of God's power.

Commentary: This is because in the state of *fana* (intoxication) or absorption in God, his actions are God's action. This is confirmed by the Hadith-al-Qudsi: *Bi Yasmao...* and *Bi Yaksiro....* (He hears by Me, and sees by Me.)

At that moment what he speaks is God's speech. Human nature is either *lahi* (ignorant) or *sahi* (erring) or *ilahi* (Divine). To be ignorant and erring is human, but to be *ilahi* (Divine) is prophetic, that is to say the prophets are neither ignorant nor do they err. They are of *ilahi* (Divine) nature. Therefore, the *auliya* are always worried so long as they are in the state of *bashriyat* (human nature) and cannot enjoy the state of *tahqiq* (*fana*) and *tamkin* (*baqa*). But they are favoured with God's grace and have the power of supernatural deeds only when they come out of human attributes (*sifat-i-bashri*) because *karamat* is manifested only in the state of intoxication which is another name of *qurb* (Divine nearness). It is then that gold and ordinary stone become equal in their eyes; and none except *auliya-Allah* enjoy this status. If any one else has it, he has it only temporarily, like Haritha (one of the Prophet's companions) who one day became detached from this physical world and was attached with the spiritual world and said, "When I detached myself from the world, gold, silver, stone and clay were one to me."

But when he was seen working in a garden the next day, someone asked him, "What are you doing?" He said, "I am earning my livelihood as I cannot do without it." This shows how different they are at different times. In the state of *sahw* (sobriety) the *auliya* look like ordinary men, while in the state of *fana* they reach the domain of the prophets. In other words, in the state of *sahw* (*baqa-bi-Allah*), they look like ordinary men; while in the state of *sukr* (*fana-fi-Allah*) they lose themselves in the ocean of Divinity. The mint of austerity turns the flesh into gold, and they become gold, nay, the whole universe is gold for them as said by Shibli:

"We find gold wherever we go, silver wherever we sit, and pearls wherever we perch."

Master Abul Qasim Qushairi once told me that when he asked Shaikh Tabrani to let him know something of his earlier days of Sufi life he replied, "Once I went into a river bed near Sarkhas to answer the call of nature. Every stone that I picked up turned into a pearl, and I threw it away." This is because both were equal to him, nay, the pearl to him was of lesser value because what he wanted was stone at that time.

I have heard from Imam Khazai in Sarkhas saying, "Once during my boyhood I went out in search of mulberry leaves for the sake of silkworms and climbed a tree. I saw Shaikh Abul Fazl bin Hasan passing underneath in a state of God-intoxication. I said to myself, 'Thank God. He has not seen me'. Suddenly he looked up and said, 'O my Lord, it is over a year that Thou hast not given me a single penny to get my hair cut. Is this the way Thou treatest Thy friends?' He had hardly said this when all the leaves, branches and roots of the tree turned gold. Seeing this he said, 'Good Lord! Even my humble submission is not liked. Can't I utter a single word to relieve the burden of my heart?'"

It is related of Shibli that he threw four *dinars* (gold coins) into a river. When asked why he did so, he said, "The best place for the stones is the river." When asked why he did not let any human beings benefit from it, he said, "By God! Will I not be answerable

to God for lifting the veil from my heart and placing it on the hearts of my Muslim brothers? It is not correct in Islam to wish for a brother Muslim what I do not wish for myself." This sort of behaviour is the outcome of intoxication (*sukr*) of which I have said a lot before. The object of this discussion was to affirm *karamat*.

However, Junaid, Abul Abbas Sayari, Abu Bakr Wasiti and Muhammad bin Ali Tirmidhi are of the view that *karamat* takes place in the state of sobriety and *baqa* (*tamkin*) and not in the state of intoxication (*fana*). This is because *auliya-Allah* are the elite and chosen people of the Almighty deputed to administer the affairs of the world, to look after mankind and to cater for their needs.

It is therefore, necessary that their judgment is the best, and their hearts are the kindest over mankind. And this quality is characteristic of only those who have reached God. Intoxications and raptures are characteristics of the beginners. When maturity comes, intoxication is replaced by sobriety. It is then that *wilayat* reaches the stage of maturity and *karamat* attains the degree of perfection.

It is a well established tradition that among the Sufis that the *Autad* (saints belonging to the hierarchy of hidden *auliya-Allah* who have been deputed to do administrative duties in the world) go around the whole universe in the night, and if they fail to observe any spot, something goes wrong there. In that case they look up to the *qutub* of the world who rectifies the mistake by exerting his spiritual influence. The statement that gold and dust are the same to the saints of God is applicable to those who are in the state of intoxication, and are of limited vision. But this is not greatness. Greatness is to take gold as gold and stone as stone, and to understand the mischief thereof as well. So that he can address gold and silver like this, "O yellow and white metal, you can deceive others, not me. Your presence cannot turn my head, as I know how dangerous you are." Therefore, he who recognises the vices of gold, finds it as a veil between God and himself, and he renounces it and gets closer to Him.

Moreover, when he regards gold as stone, he need not give it up. You know that as Haritha was in the state of intoxication, he found gold, silver and stone alike, but since Abu Bakr was in the state of sobriety he recognised the mischief of gold and gave it up so that when the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) enquired what he had left in his house for his family, he said, "God and His Prophet."

Abu Bakr Warraq Tirmidhi has said, "Once Muhammad bin Ali said to me 'O Abu Bakr, I want to take you to a place, would you come?' I said, 'Why not?' So we departed and soon found ourselves in an arid desert in which we saw a golden throne placed under a green tree with a spring of fresh water nearby. On the throne sat a well dressed man. As we approached, he left the throne and asked Muhammad bin Ali to sit on it. As he sat on the throne groups of people started coming from all round till their number rose to forty. After that, he bade them to do their work. They got up and brought food from the unseen. After we finished the meal Muhammad bin Ali asked him several questions

and spoke at length of which I did not understand a word. After sometime he bade farewell to that man and we came back home, and I was told by Muhammad bin Ali that I had been blessed." After a long time I happened to go again to Tirmidh and I asked the shaikh to tell me about that place and who that man was. He said it was the land of Bani Israel and the man was *qutub* of the world.

I said, "O shaikh, how did we reach that distant land in a short time?" He said, "O Abu Bakr, your business was to reach the place and not seek the reason." This is the sign of sobriety and not intoxication. This is in brief the difference between intoxication and sobriety.

Now I am going to prove the validity of *karamat* and *mu'jizat* on the basis of the Holy Qur'an and Sunnah of the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) which could serve as a warning for the *murids* (seekers), entertainment for the *ulama*, reminder for the specialists and stimulant for the common people to invigorate their faith and kill their doubts, by the grace of Allah Almighty.

When the validity of miracles has been established logically, it is necessary to get it proved religiously as well. Know that the Holy Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) are full of the accounts of miracles performed by the Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) and to question it amounts to questioning the validity of the sacred books (*nasus*[1]). God has said in the Holy Qur'an, "And we sent clouds to overshadow them and send "*manna wa salva*[2]" from the unseen to feed them." [2:57]. That is to say the clouds always overshadowed the Bani Israel and *manna* and *salva* was provided to them every night. If somebody out of the renegades says this miracle is of the time of Moses, peace be upon him, I agree because the *karamat* of the *auliya* result from the *mu'jizat* of the prophet, peace be upon him. If they say it is a thing of past, and things of the past do not apply to the present, my reply is that when Moses left his people and went over to Mount Sinai, the people continued to get the foodstuff miraculously in his absence. Similarly, the saints of Islam continue to perform supernatural deeds although they are distant in time from the Prophet (s.a.w.). Distance in time and space does not matter. If a miracle can be possible despite distance in space, it can be possible despite distance in time.

Similarly, the Holy Qur'an tells us that when Prophet Sulaiman, peace be upon him, wanted the throne of Bilqis to be brought to him, Asif bin Barkhiya brought it within a twinkling of the eye [27:40]. But the Prophet did not object to it, nor did he refuse it, or considered it impossible. This action on the part of Asif was not a *mu'jizat* since Asif was not a prophet. It was necessarily a *karamat*. If it were performed by the Prophet himself, peace be upon him, it would have been called a *mu'jizat*.

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1 *Nasus* is the plural of *nas* which means any verse of the Qur'an or Hadith of unambiguous nature

2 *Manna* was a kind of sweet gum stuck upon the branches of trees and bushes, and *salva* were the quails (birds similar to the Batair in Pakistan)

The Holy Qur'an also tells us that when Prophet Zakariya, peace be upon him, went to Maryam, peace be upon her, there he found fruits of the summer season in winter and of the winter season in summer. And when he asked, "Where did you get it from?" She replied, "It is from Allah." [3:37]. Now everybody knows that Maryam was not a prophet.

God has also said in the Holy Qur'an, "O Mary, shake the trunk of the tree and you will get fresh dates." [19:25]. Moreover, the Holy Qur'an tells us the story of the People of the Cave (*Ashabul Kahf*) and their dog who spoke to them, and that they slept there for several hundred years [18:18]. All these happenings are considered to be *karamat* and not *mu'jizat* because these were not performed by the prophets. These extraordinary acts such as travelling over long distances in a short time, appearances of food and drink from unexpected sources and the like, were the result of prayers to the Almighty who answered these prayers by His Grace.

The Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.), is also eloquent on the possibility of *karamat*, particularly the *Hadith-al-ghar* (Tradition of the Cave). The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) said that three persons slept in a cave during a cold night. After some time, a rock rolled down the hill and blocked the entrance of the cave. They got terrified and said, "We can never escape unless we plead sincerely to the Lord on the basis of one of our most genuine acts free from the slightest shadow of ostentation."

One of them prayed to God saying, "I used to serve my aged parents by collecting fire wood and buying food stuff out of the sale proceeds. I would then mix the food with the milk from my goat and feed them. One day, I was late in preparing the food and they went to sleep without taking their meals. I took the bowl in my hand and kept standing by their bed for the whole night thinking that they may get up any moment and want food. If I did the right thing, O Lord, kindly save us." At this the rock moved a little and a small hole was visible.

Another man said, "My uncle had a daughter who was extremely beautiful. I fell in love with her and wanted her to come to me but she was reluctant. One night, I sent her a hundred and twenty dinars (gold coins) and after a number of promises and pretexts she agreed to come. When I went close to her, fear of God overpowered me and I let her go, along with the money I had given her. I pray to the Almighty that if I was right in doing this, kindly rescue us from this dungeon." On this the rock moved a little more but the hole was not big enough to allow them to get out.

The third man said, "Once, I employed several persons to work at my house. When the work was finished all the labourers came and received their wages but one of them was missing. I purchased a goat with his money. After a year, there were two goats. They went on multiplying till there was a big flock in a few years time. Suddenly that labourer appeared and demanded his wages. I told him to take away that flock of goats as these were his and he was the sole owner of it. He said, 'Why are you joking with a poor man?' I said I am not joking. I purchased a goat with your money and this is the result. So

he took the goats away. O Lord, if what I say is true, kindly help us." On this the rock moved a bit more and they came out of the cave. This also is a supernatural deed.

There is another Hadith known as the *Hadith Jarij* (George, the monk). Abu Hurairah says that the Holy Prophet, (s.a.w.) said there have been three persons in the world who spoke in the cradle. One of them was Prophet Isa, peace be upon him. The second was a child who rescued a monk in Bani Israel, known as Jarij. Jarij was a pious man. His mother also was a pious lady observing *purdah*. Once she went to see her son, but since he was busy in prayers he did not open the door for her. She went to him the next day and found him again busy in prayer. She was upset and prayed to God to defame her son for not doing his duty to his mother. At that time there lived a very wicked woman. She made a vow and said she would mislead Jarij. She went into his room but he did not pay attention to her. As she came out, she accused him of illicit action. On her way back she met a shepherd, and slept with him. She got pregnant and gave birth to a son. When the people gathered around her to account for the crime, she accused Jarij for it. The crowd arrested Jarij and brought him before the King. Jarij addressed the baby and said, " Who is your father ?" The baby replied, "My mother has wrongly accused Jarij. My father is such and such shepherd."

The third child who spoke was a baby who was once sitting with his mother in front of their house. When a handsome horseman happened to pass by, the mother prayed to God that her son be like him. The baby said, "I do not want to be like him." After a while a gay and care-free woman passed by. The baby's mother said, "Lord, do not make my son like this woman." But the baby cried out, " O Lord, make me like her." The mother was astonished to hear this and asked, "Why do you say this ?" The baby replied, "Because the horseman is a tyrant and this woman is good, although she is known as a bad woman. I do not want to be a tyrant, but I wish to be a pious person."

Another story of *karamat* is that of Zaida, a maidservant of Commander of the Faithful (*Amirul Mu'minin*) Umar, may Allah be pleased with him. One day Zaida went to the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.), and said, "O Prophet of God, today I went out to collect firewood. As soon as I collected a bundle of wood and placed it on a rock before putting it on my head, a horseman descended from the sky, saluted me and said, 'Go and salute Muhammad on my behalf and tell him that Ridhwan the Gatekeeper of paradise conveys to you the happy news that your *ummah* has been divided into three categories. The people of the first category will be sent to paradise without accounting for their sins. Those in the second category will be shown leniency in their account. While the people of the third category will be forgiven by your intercession (*shafa'at*).' Having said this he flew towards the sky and disappeared." The Prophet said, "O Zaida, do not try to lift the bundle of wood but tell the rock to take it to Umar's house." She acted on the advice of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and the rock moved and brought the bundle of firewood to the gate of Umar's house to the bewilderment of all who saw it. At this the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "I thank my Lord for having given me the happy news about my *ummah* through Ridhwan, and for exalting a woman of my *ummah* to the status of Maryam before my leaving this world."

It is also related in the Hadith that once the Prophet (s.a.w.), sent Ala bin Hadhrami to lead an expedition. On their way to the destination, they came across a river and walked over the surface of the water without even wetting their shoes.

It is said that once Abdullah bin Umar, may Allah bless him and his father, was travelling through a forest when he saw a group of people terrified by a lion which was sitting on the road. Abdullah bin Umar said, "O beast, if thou hast been sent by God then come on and frighten us. If not, make way for us." The lion bowed its head in respect and went away.

Ibrahim Nakhyi[1] has said, "Once I saw a man sitting up in the air. I said, 'How did you get this position ?' He said, 'I got it by merely turning my back to the world and faced God. I was then asked what my desire was. I said I want to ride the air and I got it'."

It is stated that a Persian went to Madinah with the intention to murder Caliph Umar, may Allah be pleased with him. When he enquired about his whereabouts, he was told that the Caliph was busy making bricks out in the desert. When he reached there, he found Umar fast asleep on the ground with a brick under his head. He thought how easy it was to kill the man who was the source of all wars in Persia. As he drew his sword, two tigers appeared from nowhere and rushed towards him. As he cried for help, Umar woke up and the tigers disappeared. Seeing this, he apologised to Umar and embraced Islam.

During the reign of Hadhrat Abu Bakr, may Allah be pleased with him, Khalid bin Walid was campaigning in Iraq when he was presented a packet of eatables mixed with deadly poison. He opened the packet, took out a mouthful of the stuff and swallowed saying *Bismillah*. The poison, however, did not do him any harm. The enemies of Islam were astonished to see this and many of them embraced Islam.

Hasan Basri says, "There was a Negro in Abadan who used to live in taverns. Once I bought food from a shop for him and went to him. He said, 'What is this?' I said. 'It is something for you to eat'. He laughed at me and waved his hand around. As I looked around, I saw every stone, brick and wall turned into gold. I was ashamed of myself and ran away in terror, leaving the food behind."

Ibrahim bin Adham has said, "Once, I asked a shepherd to give me some water. He said, 'I have both milk and water. What do you want?' I said, 'I want water'. He rose and struck his staff on a rock. As he did this, fresh water started flowing from the rock. When I felt amazed, he said, 'Do not be astonished. When a slave is obedient to the Lord, everything in the world is obedient to him.' "

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[1] Ibrahim Nakhyi was one of the teachers of Imam Abu Hanifah. He was one of the disciples of the famous companion of the prophet, Abdullah bin Mas'ud.

Once Abu Darda and Silma (companions of the Prophet, s.a.w.) were sitting together. They were taking meals and heard the foodstuff pronouncing 'Glory to God' (*Kalimah-i-Tasbih*).

Abu Saeed Kharraz said, "For some time I developed the habit of taking meals after three days. I was travelling in a desert; on the third day I felt hungry but I did not have anything to eat. Suddenly I heard a voice saying 'O Abu Saeed, do you want food to satisfy your *nafs* (lower self) or strength without eating ?' I said, 'My Lord, I want strength'. I found myself strong enough to travel for twelve more stages of journey (*manzil*) without food."

It is commonly known in Tustar today that the residence of Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari is known as the 'House of the Beast' (*Baitus-Siba*). This is because wild animals like lions and wolves, etc. used to visit his house, where he gave them food and comfort.

Abul Qasim of Merv said, "Once Abu Saeed Kharraz and I were going along the bank of a river when we saw a young man with a bag of food around his neck. Abu Saeed said, 'There is something great in this man. He appears to be a *wali* but the bag of food shows he is a wayfarer. Let us go and see what he is'. When we went closer to him, Kharraz said, 'O young man, what is the way to God?' He replied, 'There are two ways to God. One is for the common people and one for the elite. You know nothing about the way of the elite, and the way of the vulgar is the one which you are following. You think you are following the right path and regard the bag of food as a veil'."

Dhunnun of Egypt says, "Once I was travelling in a boat with a group of people, going from Egypt to Jeddah. I saw a young man clad in a patched frock and wanted to associate with him, but dared not go near him out of his majestic bearing since he was constantly engaged in worship. One of the passengers lost a jewel and thought that the young man was the thief. They wanted to manhandle him when I intervened and said that I wanted to question him about it. I went close to him and told him what the people were about to do. He looked up to the heavens and uttered something. Suddenly, countless fishes came on the surface each with a jewel in its mouth. He took one jewel and after giving it to the accuser, walked away on the surface of the river and disappeared. Actually the man who stole the jewel was one of the sailors who felt very much ashamed when it fell out of his pocket."

Ibrahim Rakki has said, "During the early days of my initiation I went to see Shaikh Muslim Maghribi. When I entered his mosque I saw him leading a prayer, but when he pronounced *Sura-al-Fatiha* incorrectly, I felt sorry to have taken pains to see him. In a state of disgust, I went along the river bank where I was chased by two lions. As I cried aloud, the Shaikh came out of his hut. When the lions saw him they bowed down before him. He caught hold of the ears of both and said 'You, the dogs of God ! Did I not tell you not to trouble my guests.' Then he addressed me and said, 'O Abu Ishaq,

you are busy correcting the exterior for the sake of pleasing the people, and therefore, you are afraid of the creatures; while we are busy correcting the interior for the sake of pleasing God, and therefore, the creatures are afraid of us'."

Once, my Shaikh, may Allah be pleased with him, and I went from Baitul Jin to Damascus (Damshiq). It was raining heavily and I was finding it difficult to walk in water and mud, but when I looked at the Shaikh, he was going along with absolutely dry clothes and shoes. I said, "Sire, how is it possible ?" He said, "God has saved me from mud and dirt ever since I saved my heart from greed and resolved to have unflinching faith in Him."

Once, I Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi was faced with a difficult problem and went to Tus to get it solved by Shaikh Abul Qasim Gorgani. He was sitting in his room in the mosque. As I entered the room I found him lecturing to a pillar on the same question I had in mind. When I said, "Sire, whom are you addressing?"' He replied, "My dear son, Allah Almighty made this pillar to ask a question which I have answered."

In the area of Farghana there was a village called Salatak. In that village lived a shaikh who was one of the "*Autad al Ardh*" (Spiritual Pillars) called Bab Umar. In fact, every shaikh in that land is called *Bab*. He had a wife named Fatimah. I went to see the shaikh. When I approached him, he said, "What is the reason for your coming here?" I replied, "So that I might see you personally and that you might cast a loving glance at me." He said, "My dear son, I myself have been seeing you continuously since such and such a day and wish to go on looking at you till you are separated from me.' When I counted back the days, I discovered that it was exactly the same day of my conversion (*taubah*). He went on to say, "My dear son, travelling physically to see the Friends of God is child's play. Henceforward, pay visits by spiritual attention." This is because physical visits are more difficult and less useful. After that he bade Fatimah to bring what she had. She brought a dish full of fresh grapes which were not possibly available in Farghana in that season.

Once I was staying in the shrine of Shaikh Abu Saeed Abul Khair at Mihna. I saw a white pigeon flying into the sheet of cloth covering the grave. I thought somebody's pet had escaped. But when I lifted the cloth, there was nothing in it. I continued to see this happen for three days, and was wondering what it could be, till the shaikh told me in a dream that the white pigeon was the purity of his soul thirsting for contacts with his bodily remains.

Abu Bakr Warraq has said, "Once Muhammad bin Ali Hakim Tirmidhi gave me the manuscript of a book written by him to be thrown into the river. On the way out, I looked at it and I found it full of Divine mysteries. I therefore decided to keep it, and went and told the shaikh that I had done what he wanted me to do. He asked, 'What did you see ?' I said, 'Nothing'. 'Then you have not thrown it in the river', he said. I said to myself, 'I am now faced with two problems: firstly, why does he want the manuscripts to be thrown into the river and secondly, what will be the result of throwing it into the

river'. I went back and threw the manuscript into the river, and to my astonishment, a box emerged out of the water with the lid opened. The manuscript went into the box, the lid closed and the box went down. On my return I told the shaikh what had happened. He said, 'Now you have done what I told you to do'. When I asked the Shaikh to tell me the truth about the whole affair, he said, 'Since the book I wrote was full of spiritual secrets too difficult to be understood, brother Khidr wanted to have it. The fish which brought the box was sent by him and God Almighty saved the book from being spoiled by water'."

There are so many stories about *karamat* which are not possible to describe. The object of this book is to state the principles and details of Sufism since the imitators have compiled so many books on these topics which are being broadcasted from the pulpits everywhere. I intend to present a comprehensive study to avoid coming back to it again.

Superiority of Prophets to the *Auliya*

Know that all the *mashaikh* (plural of *shaikh*) of all times are unanimous on the question of superiority of the prophets to the *auliya* (saints), who affirm the veracity of the prophets and carry out their missions. This is because the end of *walayat* is the beginning of prophethood. It is true that all the prophets are *auliya-Allah* (Friends of God) but not all *auliya* are prophets.

Another difference is that while the prophets are permanently immune from the mischief of their *nafs* (lower self), the *auliya* are only temporarily so; that is, while the state of the *auliya* is called *hal* (ecstasy), the state of the prophets is called *maqam* (sobriety). And what constitutes *maqam* for the *auliya* is a veil (*hijab*) for the prophets.

> **Commentary:** The *auliya's* highest position is a veil for the prophets because the latter's position is so high that the highest position of a *wali* is a step downward from Divine presence.

None of the *ulama* of the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* and Sufi masters are opposed to this viewpoint. It is only a small section of the Anthropomorphists (Hashwiyah) of Khurasan who have come out with self-contradictory statements on the subject of Islamic monotheism (*tauhid*). They claim to be *auliya* (Friends). Truly, they are "friends" but of the Devil, not of God. They believe in the superiority of *auliya* over the prophets, and in doing so they commit the folly of regarding an ordinary follower of Muhammad to be superior to him.

There is another class of the Anthropomorphists who believe in reincarnation (*hulul*) and descent (*nuzul*) of God into man by way of transmigration of souls (*tanasukh* or

intiqal) violating thereby the doctrine of indivisibility of the Divine Being. These are the two sects which I promised in this book to expose by the grace of God. These two sects are in agreement with the Brahmins in denying the superiority of the prophets. And he who denies the superiority of the prophets is an infidel, because the prophets are the guides and leaders (*imam*) while the *auliya* are their obedient followers. It is logically untenable to believe that the followers of an *imam* is superior to the *imam* himself. Briefly speaking, all the achievements, positions and merits of the *auliya* put together are simply nothing as compared with a single act of excellence of a prophet. This is because the *auliya* are the seekers or pilgrims while the prophets have reached the destinations and realised God, and have come back to guide mankind to the same goal and have succeeded in their mission. This accursed class of infidels argue that when a king sends an ambassador to another king, the ambassador is necessarily inferior to the king to whom he is sent, like Jibrail who was sent to the prophets, but was junior to them.

This argument does not apply to the prophets since, while an ambassador is sent to one great man, the prophets are sent to the whole human race consisting of numerous ordinary persons who can never be superior to the prophets. It is an established fact and none can deny it. Therefore, even a single moment of the prophet's life is more sublime than the entire life of a *wali*. The reason is that the highest stage of the *auliya* is *mushahidah* (vision) which is the starting point of a prophet's excellence. There is no comparison between them. All the *auliya* are unanimous on the fact that union with the Divine Being is the culminating point of sainthood (*wilayat*). This can be explained in the following manner.

The force of love takes the lover so close to the Beloved that his wits are overpowered by the brilliance of Divine Beauty and he (the lover) sees the Beloved in everything. That is why Abu Ali Rodbari has said, "When we are deprived of His vision, we cease to worship Him." That is to say worship without vision is not possible for the *auliya*. But this is the starting point of the prophets, because their whole life is perpetual vision, whether they are in the state of negation (*nafi*) or affirmation (*athbat*), whether they are united or separated, whether they are accepted or rejected, whether they are at the starting point or at the final end, they are never without Him. That is why Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, in the very beginning looked at the rising sun and said, "This is my Lord." [6:76-78]. This he said in the state of oneness (*jama'*) with God because in the state of God-intoxication, he could not see other than God. But in the next breath, he declared, "I do not love those that decline." [6:76] This is because the state of union or separation is equal to the prophets. This shows that while there is a beginning and an end of sainthood, for prophethood there is not.

The prophets were prophets as long as they lived, and will be prophets as long as they will live, and when they were not born, they were prophets in the knowledge and design of God. When somebody asked Bayazid Bistami about the status of the prophets, he said, "Sorry, it is beyond our capacity to judge. When we try to understand them we find

that we are judging them by our own standards. God has made their union and separation so subtle that human intellect is unable to understand it. The status of the prophets is as incomprehensible for the *auliya* as is the status of the *auliya* beyond the comprehension of the common people." Abu Yazid, inspite of the fact that he is called the proof (*hujjat*) of the time (by virtue of his greatness), has said "When my soul resumed its flight upwards to the realm of oneness (*wahdaniyat*), I became a bird whose body was of Divinity (*ahdiyyat*) and whose wings were of Eternity. I went on flying into the realm of the Absolute (*huwwiyat*) till I reached the realm of Pure Essence. Then I was blessed with flight in the field (*maidan*) of Everlastingness (*azliyyat*) and saw the tree of Absoluteness, and realised that it was myself. I prayed to the Almighty saying, 'O my Lord, I have been held up by myself, and I am the obstacle in my own way. What should I do ?' The Divine command was: 'O Bayazid, you will get rid of thyself by following in the foot steps of my Messenger (Muhammad). Illuminate thy eyes with the antimony of the dust of his feet and stick to his obedience.' " This is a long story. The Sufi shaikhs call it the Ascension (*Mi'raj*) of Abu Yazid. *Mi'raj* means proximity (*qurb*). *Mi'raj* of the Prophets is of open and physical nature while that of the *auliya* is of spiritual and secret nature.

Commentary: When spiritual ascension of the saints cannot be properly understood by those who have not been through it personally, how can ascension of the prophet be understood, which is much higher. However, if we go back to the subject of *jamiyyat* already explained earlier, physical ascension of the prophet can be understood to a certain extent. *Jamiyyat* is the highest stage of spiritual progress when the seeker enjoys both the states of *fana* and *baqa* simultaneously. In other words, he is united and separated at the same time. In that state of the combination of intoxication and sobriety, the saints go on progressing till they reach the stage of extreme nearness called union with God. So it is the presence of the element of sobriety in this state of spiritual progress which enables the seeker to be physically closer to God. On this basis one can understand the ascension of the Prophet of Islam, who combined in himself, the states of *fana* and *baqa* in a much greater and sublimer degree than his followers, i.e. the saints of Islam.

In the case of the *auliya*, while their soul is purified and rendered transparent, their body retains the darkness of physical nature; but in the case of the prophets their bodies are spiritualised and have gotten rid of their earthly nature. Therefore, while a prophet is always in God's presence, a *wali* is made to reach God's presence by means of intoxicating him through ecstatic raptures. It is then that he is made to become absent from himself and to get attributed with Divine Attributes by the state of union or identification with the Divine Being so that when he returns to the state of duality and regains his consciousness and individuality, he retains the effects of Divine Attributes and Divine Knowledge. So you can see the difference between a prophet and a saint. While the prophet is brought to God's presence physically, the saint's experience of nearness is spiritual in nature. Allah Almighty knows best.

Commentary: While the spiritual attainments of a *wali* are known as *'kasbi'* (acquired by effort), the prophet's attainments are *'wahbi'* (Divine gifts through sheer Divine grace). In other words while *auliya* have to work hard to get their lower self purified, the prophets are born purified. Another point of difference is that while the *auliya* get overwhelmed in Divine Presence and forget their human attributes, the prophets are never overwhelmed and always retain their human attributes *(bashriyat).*

Superiority of the Prophets and Saints to the Angels

The *ulama* of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* as well as Sufi shaikhs are unanimous on the superiority of the prophets and saints to the angels. But the Mu'tazilah sect is of the opinion that the angels are superior to the prophets because their ranks are higher, their nature are finer and their obedience to God is greater. But I maintain that they are wrong because the mere incidence of subtle nature and obedience to God does not confer superiority. Superiority depends on God's grace. The Devil did possess all these angelic qualities but was damned and cursed. So real superiority is that which is bestowed by God. Superiority of the prophets to the angels is established by the fact that the angels were commanded by God to bow before Adam. Now whose rank is higher: the *sajid* or *masjud* (the one who bows or the one who is being bowed to) ?

Commentary: The prophets are called *ma'sum* (sinless) while the saints are known as *mahfuz* (preserved) which means that they are not allowed to commit sins, although they are capable of doing that. But the prophets are not capable of committing sins at all.

If they argue that man is superior to Ka'bah, yet he bows down to Ka'bah which is nothing but a mass of mud and stone. My reply is that not a single Muslim thinks that bowing in the direction of Ka'bah is an act of worship to it. Everybody holds that while bowing in the direction of the Ka'bah, man really worships God and not the walls and stone of the Ka'bah. It is clearly stated in the Holy Qur'an that God said to the angels: "Bow down to Adam." But while commanding Muslims to bow down to Ka'bah, He said, "*Wasjudu waabudu rabbakum.*" (Bow down and worship your Lord.) This shows Adam cannot be compared to Ka'bah. Moreover, when we say our prayers while we are riding horses and camels we do not bow in the direction of the Ka'bah. But the order given to the angels was clear. It was a *sajdah* (prostration) to Adam and all the angels obeyed

the order. It was only Satan who disobeyed God and was cursed and damned forever. These are clear proofs for any person who has sense.

Another thing is that the angels may be equal to the prophets in knowledge of God but not in rank. While men are born with passion and the desire to eat and drink, the angels are without lust. Their food is the worship of God and their drink is obedience to Him. On the contrary, man is always handicapped by his beastly self which forces him to commit sins and succumb to worldly temptations, greed and lust. The result is that Satan can easily misguide him more so because (according to a Hadith) he runs through the veins and blood of man and can easily prevail upon him. So you can imagine that if he who is labouring under so many hardships and handicaps, refrains from sins, does not yield to the dictates of his beastly self and resists the attack of the devil, he is really superior to the angels who are neither in need of food nor drink, nor are they prompted by their nature to commit sins nor have they to worry about their wives' and children's food and maintenance, nor are they affected by calamities, storms, gales or floods.

I really wonder of the folly of those who think that greatness lies in outward lustre, and honour in grand appearance. Why do they not understand that real superiority lies in obeying God's commands, real honour lies in seeking His pleasure and real greatness lies in faith in God and his knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of God's nature and mysteries. Don't you know that Jibrail worshipped God for thousands of years in anticipation of the robe of honour. What was the robe of honour? It was waiting on Muhammad (s.a.w.), the best of all prophets in the Night of Ascension (*Mi'raj*). How can he who looked after the ride during the Night of Ascension, be superior to the rider (the Prophet)? Certainly superior is he who works hard to purify himself, remembers God day and night, goes through austerities, is favoured with God's proximity, presence, vision and union, and reaches the destination safely.

When arrogance of the angels passed all limits they started praising themselves and denigrating mankind. In order to demonstrate their folly to them, God Almighty told them to select from among themselves the three fittest and most capable angels to go down to the earth and act as His vicegerents to reform mankind and establish law and order there. When three angels were selected, they were sent to the earth. One of them realised his mistake and declined to go down to the earth. When the other two came to the earth, God Almighty changed their natures and they felt the desire for food, drink and sex, got corrupted and were punished. Thus, they were convinced of the superiority of men over angels. The whole discussion boils down to this, that the elite of the believers are superior to the elite of the angels and the ordinary believers are superior to the ordinary angels. So those among the mankind who are sinless (*ma'sum*) and protected (*mahfuz*) are superior to Jibrail and Mikail, and those who do not belong to the category of the sinless and the protected are superior to the *Karaman Katibeen* (Recorders) and the Watchkeepers (*Huffaz*). The Sufi shaikhs have said a lot about them. The truth is that Allah Almighty bestows honour and esteem on those He pleases. And He knows best.

This is in brief the view point of the Hakimiyah order (*Hakiman*) in regard to the various Sufi doctrines. In fact *wilayat* (sainthood) is one of the secrets of God, attainable only through discipline, and nobody knows a *wali* except a *wali*. If this had been known to all the intellectuals, it would have been difficult to differentiate a friend from a foe and the united (*wasil*) from the veiled (*ghafil*). God has, therefore, placed the pearl in a closed shell and flung it down the bottom of the ocean so that the seeker is either able to fish it out by plunging deep into the deadly billows, or perish. God knows best.

Section

The Kharraziyah Order

The Kharrazis are known after Shaikh Abu Saeed Kharraz who is author of many books on Sufism. He is known for his detachment from, and renunciation of, the world. He is the first to talk about *fana* (intoxication of union) and *baqa* (sobriety of separation). His entire philosophy consists of these two doctrines. I will now explain their significance and point out a few of the misunderstandings of some Sufis about them so that you are able to understand what the Sufis mean by *fana* and *baqa*.

Fana and *Baqa*

Allah has said: "Whatever you have is transient and what Allah has is lasting." He has also said, "Everything on earth is transient and only God Almighty is Eternal." You must know that the significance of the words '*fana*' and '*baqa*' in the Arabic language is different from their technical meanings in the science of Sufism. And the externalists (*zahiriyan*) have never been confused about the Sufi topics more than these two subjects. Etymologically, the word *baqa* has three meanings: Firstly, the terms used in respect of those things which have a beginning and an end such as this world, known as transitory; secondly, those things which have a beginning but no end, such as paradise and hell; thirdly, the Being which has no beginning and no end, i.e. God Almighty and His Attributes who has no beginning and end, and is Eternal along with His Attributes. When we talk about the everlasting Being we mean nothing but Him. There is none who shares this quality (of *baqa*) with Him. So knowledge of *fana* consists in knowing that the world is *fani* (transitory), and knowledge of *baqa* is knowing that the next world is everlasting, as Allah has said: "The next world is better and everlasting," which means that life in that world is lasting.

But when the terms *fana* and *baqa* are used to denote the state of the human mind, *fana* means negation of ignorance, and *baqa* means affirmation of knowledge; or *fana* of disobedience, and *baqa* of obedience; or *fana* of heedlessness (*ghaflat*) and *baqa* of *dhikr* (remembrance); that is to say, when a man remembers God he is *fani* in heedlessness and *baqi* in remembrance. In short, it is a replacement of bad qualities by

good qualities. But the adepts do not take *fana* and *baqa* in the sense mentioned above. They use these terms to denote the degrees of excellence of the *auliya,* that is those who have passed through the stage of *mujahidah* (self-mortification), that is those who have gone beyond states (*hal*) and status (*maqam)*, those who have crossed the stage of seeking and have reached the stage of realisation, those who have seen with their eyes what could be seen, and heard with ears what could be heard, those who have known what was knowable and achieved what was achievable, those who have found what could be found and have turned their back on what was other than God, those who have renounced everything and reached the destination, those who have ceased to aspire for anything, those for whom k*aramat* have become veils, those whose station (*maqam*) is *mushahidah* (vision of Divine Beauty), those to whom ecstasies are detestable, those whose ambition in life is loss of ambition, those whose hunger and thirst is satisfied, those whose love has found the Beloved. A poet has said, "My *fana* has ceased to be *fana* by virtue of loss of ambition. My desire now is Thy desire." When the *abd* (slave) is totally annihilated, his *baqa* reaches perfection.

When the pilgrim annihilates himself, in the state of *fana*, he subsists in God in the state of *baqa*. It is at this stage that distance (*bu'ad*) and proximity (*qurb*), love and hatred, intoxication and sobriety, union and separation, planting and uprooting, names and nouns, direction and definitions, cease to have any significance. One of the shaikhs has said: "My *maqam* and name are no more; distance and proximity ceased to exist; I lost myself to find myself in God. My *fana* is nothing but *baqa* in God."

What is *Fana*

In short, *fana* (annihilation) of a thing is not possible unless one recognises the evils of that thing and has no desire for it. One who holds an opinion contrary to it is wrong. Nor is *fana* this, that when a man loves a thing and says, "I am *baqi* (subsist) in it" and when he hates a thing, he says, "I am *fani* (annihilated) from it." For these two attitudes (love and hatred) are your own attributes which have nothing to do with *fana*. Similarly, *baqa* has nothing to do with union and separation.

Those who think that *fana* of the seeker involves his physical annihilation (disappearance), and that *baqa* of the seeker means that God has entered into him and that he has become eternal are wrong. Both of these notions are logically untenable. There was a man in India who professed to be a master of Islamic learning. He had a discussion with me on this subject. When I looked at him, I found him ignorant of *fana* and *baqa*. He could not distinguish the eternal (*qadim*) from the phenomenal (*muhdith).*

There is a section of the ignorant Sufis who think that *fana* means physical annihilation of the pilgrim. This is heretical, for physical annihilation never takes place. I ask them, "What do you mean by *fana*?" If they say *fana* means physical annihilation, it is impossible.

Commentary: Allah Ta'ala is *qadim* (eternal) while the creation is *muhdith* (transitory). *Qadim* forever was and will forever be; but *muhdith* came into being at one time, and will disappear at another time.

If they say *fana* means annihilation of attributes, I say it is possible but only when an attribute of man is replaced by another attribute of his. But it is certainly wrong to say that one can exist through the attributes of another.

The Nestorians of Rum and the Christians believe that Mary, may Allah be pleased with her, annihilated her physical being through austerities and acquired Divine Attributes, and therefore became *baqi* (lasting) through Him, and that Hadhrat Isa, peace be upon him, who was the net result, was not of human but Divine Nature, so that he, his mother and God are one and eternal.

These notions are the same as those of the Anthropomorphists called Hashwiyah or the Incarnationists (*miasma*) or materialists (*mushabbah*) who believe in reincarnation of souls and cannot differentiate between the phenomenal (*muhdith*) and the eternal (*qadim*). I ask them. "How can the eternal become phenomenal and the phenomenal eternal and how can the attributes of the phenomenal become the attributes of the eternal and vice-versa?" This is materialism pure and simple which annuls the very transitory nature of the universe and turns both the Creator and the creation into eternal; or turns both of them into transient. Moreover, it abolishes the difference between the Creator and the creation and justifies reincarnation of the Eternal into the phenomenal. This is clear heresy in that it raises the standard of the creatures to that of the Creator and lowers the standard of the Creator to that of the creatures, so that there remains no difference between them. To regard the eternal as phenomenal and the phenomenal as eternal is clearly heretical because if there is no difference between the Creator and creation, the very basis of religion is destroyed.

It, therefore, follows that *fana* and *baqa* are human attributes, and that the *fana* of one attribute results in the *baqa* of another, and *baqa* of one attribute is the result of *fana* of another attribute. *Fana* and *baqa* are two human attributes distinct from each other. But if *fana* is one-sided, or *baqa* is one-sided, there is no harm. For instance, if the lover ceases to aspire for anything other than God, God gives him more than he could have aspired for. As a *shaikh* has said: "He who gives up his ambitions for God's will, God fulfils his ambition by giving Himself to him."

He is the gainer because his own ambition was transitory, and therefore by surrendering his will to God's Will, he gave up the transitory for the Eternal.

Section

Opinions of Various Shaikhs on *Fana* and *Baqa*

Each shaikh among the shaikhs of Islam has come out with subtle (*latif*) sayings on the subject. Abu Saeed Kharraz, one of the exponents of this doctrine, has said:

"*Fana* is the extinction of self-consciousness of the seeker, and *baqa* is his consciousness of Divine Vision (*mushahidah*)."

That is to say, consciousness of his own ability to act is the sign of his imperfection. The seeker reaches the state of perfection only when he does not think he is the author of his deeds, but that God is the author of his deeds so that eventually he attributes all his deeds to God and not to himself. This is because what is perpetrated by him is imperfect, and what is perpetrated by God is all perfection. Therefore, when the seeker ceases to attribute his deeds to himself, he realises his identity with Divine Perfection. Abu Ya'qub Nahrjuri has said:

"Real servantship lies both in the state of *fana* as well as *baqa*."

This is because unless the seeker foregoes self-interest completely, he cannot serve God sincerely. Therefore, renunciation of self-interest is *fana* and serving God sincerely is *baqa*.

Ibrahim Shaybani says:

"The doctrine of *fana* and *baqa* revolve around sincerity, unity and true servantship. The rest is falsehood and heresy."

This means that when the seeker realises his oneness with God's Being (*wahdat-ul-wujud*), he finds himself overwhelmed by His presence. This is *fana*. And when his *fana* reaches perfection, he realises his powerlessness (*ijz*). This is servantship (*ubudiyat*). In that event, all he does is to seek God's pleasure (*ridha*). If someone tries to attach any other meaning to *fana* and *baqa*, that is to say, if he regards *fana* as physical *fana* of the seeker and regards *baqa* as physical *baqa* of God (in the form of man), he gets involved in heresy like the Christians as stated before.

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi, may Allah be pleased with me, am of the view that, although the statements made above vary in words, they are the same in meanings. What these statements actually mean is, that *fana* is the name of being overpowered by God's Majesty (*jalal*) and Omnipotence. When the seeker becomes oblivious of the existence of this world and the hereafter, he looks down upon the various states (*ahwal*) and stations (*maqamat*) with contempt, and his senses cease to function. Even his sense of annihilation

(*fana*) is annihilated. In that state of intense *fana*, his tongue speaks by God; and his body and mind bend down in perfect humility, as in the beginning of creation when Adam's posterity, free from the tinge of evil bent down in absolute submission before the Lord and entered into the covenant of slavehood (*ubudiyat*). [7:172].

One of the shaikhs has said:

"If I had known the way to Thee, I would have given up what I had and wept for Thee continuously."

Another shaikh has said:

"In my *fana* is the *fana* of my *fana*, and Thou hast seen how I forget myself so that when I ask: 'Who am I' I say, 'Thou.'"

These are in brief the principles of *fana* and *baqa* in the terminology of the science of Islamic spirituality, and wherever I speak of these terms in this book the implications would be the same. This is the reality of the Kharraziyah Order (*silsila*). In fact, Abu Saeed Kharraz lived this sort of life, a wonderful life indeed.

Section

The Khafifiyah Order

The Khafifiyah order owes its origin to Abi Abdullah Muhammad bin Khafif Shirazi (r.a.) who was one of the most prominent Sufi shaikhs and celebrated saints of his time, and combined in himself the knowledge of both the exoteric and esoteric sciences. He was the author of several books on various doctrines of Sufism. His merits are too many to be recorded in this book. To be brief, he was a venerable (*aziz*) shaikh with a venerable heart and venerable character free from lust although he had married four hundred times.

The reason for this is that he belonged to a royal family, and when he converted and reached a high spiritual status, the girls of high birth sought to marry him for the sake of being blessed. He would divorce each one without nearness [consummation]. But forty of them are known to have lived with him two or three at a time (the number of wives being restricted to four in Islamic Law); and served him to the best of their abilities. One of them who was the daughter of a *wazir* remained with him for forty years. I have heard Shaikh Abul Hasan Ali bin Bakran of Shiraz saying that once a number of his wives were sitting together and talking about him. All of them were unanimous in saying that they had never experienced an intimate relationship with the shaikh. However, they were under the impression that one of them must be enjoying that relationship; and they thought that the daughter of the *wazir* who lived with him for years and was

the dearmost to him was the one. Consequently, they selected two among themselves to go to the daughter of the *wazir* to ask her what kind of relationship she had with the shaikh since she was his favourite.

On asking her, she said, "When I was married to him I received a message that the shaikh would come and live with me for the night. I prepared the best meals I could, and decorated myself with the best dress I could arrange. As soon as he came, he looked at me and then at the food for sometime, and then took my hand under his shirt to feel what it was like. What I felt (was that there) were fourteen blisters from the navel to the chest. He said, 'Now ask, what are these?' When I asked him, he said, 'These are the result of my indomitable tenacity to keep myself off from such a beautiful face as yours and from such nice food as this.' He said this and went away. This is the only privacy I enjoyed with him."

The crux of his Sufism is the doctrines of 'absence' (*ghaibat*) and presence (*hudhur*). I shall now try to explain them.

Discourse on *Ghaibat* and *Hudhur*

Ghaibat and *hudhur* are two spiritual states apparently opposed to each other but have the same meanings as used by various philological experts and the spiritualists. *Hadhur* (presence) means spiritual presence with full conviction so that the unseen (*ghaib*) becomes seen (*aini*). Ghaibat (*absence*) is spiritual absence from everything other than God so that the pilgrim is absent from himself to the extent of being absent from his own absence and sees God in place of himself.

> **Commentary:** This is the same as *fana* of *fana* (annihilation of annihilation) which means *baqa* or subsistence. It is in this sense that the words *ghaibat* and *hudhur* become synonymous as said above by the author.

The outward sign of this stage of *ghaibat* is that the seeker is unable to observe the formalities (of rituals) as a prophet is unable to sin. Therefore, absence from self is presence with God, and presence with God is absence from self, so that when he is absent from himself (self-oblivious), he is present with God (God conscious); and when he is present with God, he is absent from himself. God Almighty is the Master of the situation. When Divine inspiration overpowers the seeker, his absence turns into presence with God, and separation and union lose their meanings. It is then that 'I' ness or 'my' ness no longer remains. As a shaikh has said:

"I have a heart meant for Thee exclusively. So how can division of loyalties be possible."

Since God Almighty is the master of the human heart, He may keep it absent or present as He wills. So in the realm of reality, absence and presence mean one and the same thing according to all the Sufi masters. But when the two states are examined separately, opinions differ. Some regard presence superior to absence, others give preference to absence like the doctrines of sobriety *(baqa)* and intoxication *(fana)* as stated above. But whereas in sobriety and intoxication human attributes *(sifat)* remain active, in absence and presence human attributes cease to function. And this is the reason why the latter states (absence and presence) are higher than the former (sobriety and intoxication).

The Sufi masters who give preference to absence over presence are: Ibn Ata, Hussain bin Mansur, Abu Bakr Shibli, Bindar bin Hussain, Abu Hamzah Baghdadi and Samnun Muhibb, and a section of saints of Iraq. They maintain that you yourself are the greatest veil between God and yourself. When you are absent from Him (i.e. you cease to exist spiritually), the hazards of selfhood are removed and your entire being undergoes a fundamental change. Your (earlier) stations *(maqamat)* as a beginner now act as veils and your initial states *(ahwal)* become perilous, your visions turn into obstacles, and your being into hindrance. Other than God, including yourself, ceases to exist in your eyes, and the human attributes get burnt into ashes by the flame of nearness, till it looks as if your soul has come out of the loins of Adam (in the soul world), and is listening to the sacred words of God when he is adorned with the honorary robe of union with the Divine Lord, and blessed with the honour of perception *(mushahidah)*.

So it means when you are absent from yourself, you are present with God without any veil in between.

But when you are present along with your human attributes, you cease to enjoy His nearness. This shows your presence is your ruination. And this is the meaning of the *ayat*:

"And now thou hast come to Us alone as We created thee for the first time." [6:94]

Commentary: The word *'furada'* in the above quoted *ayat* has assumed the form of the term *'fard'* in Sufi terminology. The state of *fard* is supposed to be the highest stage of spiritual perfection: When the lover *(salik)* becomes one with the Divine Being after he has gone through the stages of *fana* and *baqa*, has appointed his successors and completed his mission of guidance. This happens during the final stage of his life more or less a couple of years before death. A Sufi saint has beautifully described this state as follows:

"The *fard* has become one with *farid* (Divine Essence) so that there is no difference between them."

But Harith Muhasibi, Junaid Baghdadi, Sahl bin Abdullah, Abu Hafs Haddad, Abu Hamdun Qassar, Abu Muhammad Jariri, Husri the founder of this doctrine, and Muhammad bin Khafif, may Allah be pleased with them, maintain that presence is superior to absence.

Commentary: The Sufi masters mentioned above are those who belong to Junaidian school of thought which regard this state of sobriety (*sahw* or *baqa*) superior to the state of intoxication (*fana*). So in effect the controversy between *ghaibat* (absence) and *hudhur* (presence) is the same as between intoxication and sobriety, for, intoxication is the same as *ghaibat* (absence), and sobriety has the same significance as *hudhur* (presence). It is only a difference of expression.

Hudhur is superior to *ghaibat* (absence) because celestial beatitude lies in *hudhur (baqa-bi-Allah)* and absence *(ghaibat)* is nothing but means to the end or a way to the destination and not the destination itself. When the destination, the glorious kingdom or court of God, is reached, the way becomes regression or reversion. So he who is absent from himself, is definitely present with God. Absence *(ghaibat)* is beneficial only when it is accompanied by presence *(hudhur);* for absence without presence is madness *(janun)* and fantasy. So the best thing is to give up heedlessness *(ghaflat)* in order that absence results in presence. When the end is reached, the means loses its value. A poet has said:

The ghaib (absent) is not he who is absent from his land;
Ghaib in reality is he who is absent from desire;
The hadhir (present) is not he who has no desire;
But the hadhir is he who has no heart.

Commentary: The last line, "the *hadhir* is he who has no heart" means that *hadhir* is he whose heart is full of the Divine Beloved so that there is no room for anything else in it.

That is to say *ghaib* (absent) is he who has renounced all desires. Similarly, *hadhir* (present) is not he who has no desire, but he who has no ambitious heart, so that it is free from the thought of this world and the hereafter. A shaikh has explained it thus:

"He who is not *fani* from (or oblivious of) his lowerself (*nafs*) and from love of friends and folks, he is stranded in the states of love for the paradise and its pleasures."

Commentary: The phrase, "He who is absent from himself is present with God" mentioned in the above text, shows that absence and presence (*ghaibat* and *hudhur*) mean one and the same thing. The difference is, however, of emphasis. The Junaidian school of thought stresses the preponderance of sobriety (*hudhur* or *sahw)*, while Abu Yazid Bistami and his followers emphasise predominance of the state of absence (*fana, sukr*).

It may be mentioned that while in the religions preceding Islam, the spiritual journey consisted of one phase called *fana*; in Islam, it consisted two phases: *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah*. It means that while mystics of other religions stayed permanently in the state of *fana*, which is characterized by intoxication in God, the stage of *baqa* is characterized by sobriety. It means that while the non-Muslim mystics prefer to remain in the state of *fana* (self-annihilation) permanently and are thus lost to the world, the final stage in Islam is not to remain permanently absorbed in *fana*, but to descend to the state of *baqa*, individuality or duality to be able to serve God, serve mankind and carry out the mission of guidance.

This does not mean that the state of *baqa* or duality (also called *ubudiyat*) is attained at the loss of *fana*. Not at all. The speciality of Islamic spirituality is that the Muslim saints (*auliya-Allah* or Friends of God) are in the state of *fana* (intoxication) and *baqa* (sobriety) simultaneously. In other words, the storm of love in their hearts is so great that they do not get intoxicated at any stage of nearness or union *(qurb wa wasl)*, and go on striving to attain higher and higher stages of proximity for their entire life, and will go on doing so in paradise as well since there is no end to the Divine Being which is like a limitless ocean without any beginning or end.

This stage of combination of the states of *fana* and *baqa* (intoxication and sobriety) is called *jamiyyat* which is not found in any religion except Islam. It is at this stage that the lovers enjoy the pleasures of union and the pangs of separation at the same time. It is at this stage that he is both man of God and man of the world. It is at this stage that he is both absorbed (intoxicated) and sober. It is at this stage he can bow down to the Lord in absolute humility and submission without impairing the state of intoxication *(fanaiyyat)* and enjoys the charms of union without jeopardizing his status of slavehood (*ubudiyat* and sobriety). It is at this stage that he gets charmed by music and poetry and sees glimpses of Divine Beauty in everything and is therefore enamoured by the legends of the moth and candle *(shama-o-parwana),* rose and nightingale *(gul-o-bulbul),* cup and wine *(bada-o-saghir),* and the cup-bearer *(saqi)*. It is at this stage that the boredom of mundane affairs is mitigated by sublimity of spiritual bliss. It is at this stage that brutality of human life is replaced by beatitude. It is at this stage that man ceases to be a selfish brute and turns into an angel, loving, helping and serving his fellow beings. And it is at this stage that having been attributed with Divine Attributes in the

stage of *fana,* he is delegated Divine powers and is crowned as the Vicegerent of God on earth and wins the grand title of *"al insan-ul-kamil"* (Perfect Man).

It is stated that once one of the disciples *(murids)* of Dhunnun Misri went to see Shaikh Abu Yazid Bistami. When he knocked at the door, Abu Yazid said, "Who art thou and whom dost thou seek ?" He replied, "I want to see Abu Yazid." Abu Yazid said, "Who is Abu Yazid; where is he? And what is he? I have been seeking him for years, but cannot find him." When the man went back and reported the matter to Dhunnun he said, "My brother Abu Yazid has joined those who have reached the state of *fana-fi-Allah."*

Once a man went to Shaikh Junaid and asked the shaikh to pay attention to him for a while so that he could speak to the shaikh. The shaikh said, "My dear man, you want something which I have been searching for so long. It is for years that I have been trying to become present to myself for a while, but I cannot. How can I be present with you in this state?" This shows that absence involves the peril of being veiled, and presence involves the pleasure of vision. So how can veil be equal to vision? Shaikh Abu Saeed expresses the same thing in the following words:

The clouds of separation have been dispelled by Divine Beauty,
As morning light dispels the darkness.

What the Sufi shaikhs have said about absence and presence pertain to *hal*, not *kal* (practice not theory, experience not expression). Actually these two terms mean one and the same thing in reality though they appear to be different. What is presence *(hudhur)* with God ? It is nothing but absence *(ghaibat)* from self. It is one and the same thing. It is equally correct to say that he who is not absent from self, is not present with God, and that he who is present with God is absent from himself.

Similarly, restlessness on the part of Prophet Ayub (Job), peace be upon him, was not actually due to the state of absence from himself. It is for this reason that God Almighty regarded his impatience as patience; so that when he said:

"I have been afflicted." [21:83]

God said:

"Verily, he was patient." [38:44]

The significance of the terms absence and presence is explicit in this story if you look at it carefully.

Junaid has said, "There was a time when the inhabitants of heaven and earth wept over my bewilderment *(hairat)*. Then came the time when I wept over their absence. Now my condition is that I am aware neither of them nor of myself." This is a good example of presence with God.

This is in a nutshell the significance of *ghaibat* and *hudhur* in the Khafifiyah Order. I have refrained from going into details for keeping this book as brief as possible, for brevity is my aim.

Section

The Sayyariyah Order

The Sayyaris owe their origin to Abul Abbas Sayyari who was one of the most prominent shaikhs of Merv. He was one of the companions of Abu Bakr Wasiti and was a scholar of versatile merits. Even today, there are numerous saints of this order in Nasa and Merv. No *silsila* (order) except his has retained its original character so far, since Nasa and Merv have never been without a spiritual leader of eminence. There has been an interesting correspondence between his followers of Nasa and Merv. I have seen some of these letters at Merv. These are very good letters and deal with the controversy about union and separation *(jama' wa tafriqa)*. These terms are commonly used by the experts of various professions differently. In arithmetic, the word *'jama"* means addition, and *'tafriq'* means subtraction. In the science of grammar *'jama"* means similarity and *'farq'* means dissimilarity of derivation of words. According to the jurists, the word *'jama"* stands for the authoritative source *(nas)* while *'tafriqa'* implies analogical reasoning. In scholasticism, *'jama"* means the oneness of the Essence and Attributes of God, while *'tafriqa'* connotes separation thereof. But in Sufism the significance is different. I am now going to describe the significance of these terms in the science of Sufism together with the difference of opinion amongst the *mashaikh* on the subject.

Discourse on *Jama'* and *Tafriqa* (Union and Separation)

Allah Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an,

"Allah calls all mankind to the abode of peace."

This is *jama'* i.e. a collective invitation to mankind. Then He has said:

"He guides to the straight path those He wills." [10:26]

This is differentiation or discrimination *(tafriqa)* based on God's will. That is to say He united them under His command *(hukum)* but separated them under His will *(mashiyat)*.

In this way some were accepted and some rejected. Similarly, His command to desist from sin was for all; but He willed salvation only for some of them. Consequently, *jama'* signifies His command and *tafriqa* His will. For instance, He commanded Prophet Ibrahim, peace be upon him, to cut his son's (Ismail) head, while He willed that he should not. He commanded Iblis to bow before Adam, but willed that he should not. He commanded Adam not to eat wheat, but willed that he should, and so on. Therefore, it is right to say:

"Union is what He unites by His Attributes, and *tafriqa* is that which He separates by His Acts."

Commentary: This can be understood by the following example. There is a king who is kind to his subject people. But also he has ordered, for maintaining law and order that a murderer will be hanged. By nature (*ansaf* or attributes) he is good and kind to all, but he discriminates (separates) the murderers and hangs them to preserve law and order although he is kind and does not like anybody to lose his life. Similarly, it is said that Allah Almighty is very kind and generous and does not like anyone to be afflicted. But He discriminates or separates those who do mischief from the application of His general rule of being kind to all.

All this necessitates giving up human will for the sake of Divine Will, i.e. renunciation of your own desires and submission to Divine Will. And all the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* agree with the *mashaikh* on this explanation of *jama'* and *tafriqa* except the Mu'tazilah. Again there is a difference of opinion on the various aspects of *jama'* and *tafriqa*. Some use these terms to denote Divine Unity *(tauhid)*, some Divine Attributes *(sifat)* and some Divine Acts *(af'al)*. Those who apply them to Divine Essence (*dhat*) or *tauhid* maintain that there are two levels: the level of Divine Attributes (grace) and the level of human attributes.

The level of Divine Grace is attained purely by Divine Mercy in which man's effort does not come at all. The second level is of human effort (*kasb*) in which the seeker is to be firm in his conviction and sincere in his mind about God's grace. Abu Ali Rodbari is of this view.

Those who apply these terms to Divine Attributes, hold that *jama'* is His general nature (command) and *tafriqa* is His actions with which human will has nothing to do. This is because in Divinity (*Ilahiyyat*), He has no associate (*sharik*) or partner. Consequently, both *jama'* and *tafriqa* apply only to Him. It is said:

"*Jama'* is equality in principle."

And there is nothing eternal except His Essence (*dhat*) and Attributes (*sifat*), on which there is no difference of opinion. This means that God is known by His *sifat* (Attributes) which are eternal like His Essence (*dhat*), and that *sifat* are not different from *dhat*, because difference and numbers are untenable with His Unity (*tauhid*). There is no definition of *jama'* except in the sense given above.

So far as *tafriqa* is concerned, this refers to Divine Actions which vary in various cases, from being (*wujud*) to non-being (*adam*). Moreover, non-beings which are of accidental character (*mumkin-al-wujud*), are of two kinds: those which are capable of *fana* (annihilation) and those which are of *baqa* (subsistence).

There is another section of the scholars who think that the term *jama'* and *tafriqa* apply to knowledge (*ilm*). They are of the opinion that *jama'* means knowledge of Divine Unity (*tauhid*) and *tafriqa* means knowledge of Divine Commands. Therefore, they say that knowledge of the fundamentals (*usul*) of Islam is *jama'* and that knowledge of the details (*fara'*) is *tafriqa*. One of the *mashaikh* has said:

"*Jama'* is that on which the religious scholars are unanimous, and *tafriqa* is that on which they are divided."

But the Sufi shaikhs, whenever they talk of *tafriqa*, they attribute it to human actions (*makasib*) such as *mujahidah* (mortification); and when they mention the word *jama'* they mean Divine Favours (*mawahib*) such as *mushahidah* (Divine Grace). That is to say whatever is achieved by human effort is called *tafriqa*, and what is awarded by Divine Grace and Divine Guidance is *jama'*. But greatness lies in the fact that the seeker attributes his own effort to God's grace and thinks he has done nothing, and that it is God who has enabled him to do what he has done. In other words, he should regard his actions as God's actions, not his own, as indicated in the following *Hadith-al-Qudsi*,

"When my servant tries to come close to me by supererogatory worship, I love him. And when I love him, I get so close to him that I become his ears, eyes, hands and tongue, and he hears by Me, sees by Me, speaks by Me, and does everything by Me."

This means that when the seeker makes supreme effort to gain Allah's nearness, Allah loves him and absorbs his being in Divine Being so that his actions become God's actions, and he hears by Divine Hearing, sees by Divine Sight, speaks by Divine Speech and does everything by Divine Power. He remembers Allah so much that he loses his *dhikr* in Divine *dhikr* and does not attribute it to himself. God's *dhikr* overpowers him and human attributes no longer remain human. So his *dhikr* becomes God's *dhikr* and he assumes God's attributes, like Abu Yazid who said:

"Glory be to me, how great is my position."

But what he said was the speech of God Himself, although the speaker was Abu Yazid. Moreover, the Prophet, peace be upon him, said:

"God speaks with the tongue of Umar."

Commentary: There are three occasions in the history of Islam when the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, consulted his companions on some topics and finally when God's verdict was revealed it coincided with Hadhrat Umar's opinion.

As a matter of fact, when in the state of *fana,* the seeker is so overwhelmed by the Divine Majestic presence that he loses his being in God's Being, and his attributes are replaced by Divine Attributes so that the words he speaks are really the words of God (in accordance with Hadith quoted earlier). But it does not mean that the seeker merges his being in the Divine Being, or he and God become one, and man becomes God incarnate, for, God is far above what the heretics assert.

Commentary: The author is here voicing the well established scholastic beliefs of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* who reject the theories of *hulul* and *ittihad* (reincarnationist tendencies) prevalent among the non-Muslims like the Christians and Hindus who regard Jesus Christ and Rama and Krishna as God-incarnates. The theory of *hulul* adopted by the heretics is that God merges his Being in the man's being. This is rejected by the Muslim theologians because God's Being is unlimited and cannot be contained by any limited being, be it man, animal or idols. This is because logically, the infinite cannot be contained by the finite.

What happens is that in the state of extreme intimacy and nearness, man's faculties get dominated by Divine Attributes (powers) so that man's faculties are completely overpowered and cease to function. This state of affairs is called the state of *jama'* (union, which came to be known as *wahdat-ul-wujud* in later ages).

Commentary: The state of *jama'* became known as *wahdat-ul-wujud* in the later ages when the scholars and saints of Islam like Ghazali and ibn Arabi went into further details about the conception of God in Islam, and openly discussed the subtle themes which had hereto only been hinted indirectly at in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) for the sake of precaution, since Islam at that time was passing through the age of idol worship and direct disclosure of subtle truth might have triggered-off the old controversies or tendencies of idolatry and

incarnationism. Therefore, our author has carefully and cautiously used the term *jama'* which is oneness of being or modern *wahdat-ul-wujud* pure and simple, and which the scholars of later ages such as ibn Arabi, Jami, Mahmud Shabistari and others, talked about in unambiguous terms. Their stand, in brief, is that since God Almighty is the Creator and the Author of the Universe, the *wujud* (being) of the universe cannot be separated from His *wujud* (being) in the same manner in which a book written by an author and poetry composed by a poet cannot be different or separate from the author or the poet.

To think the universe has a separate *wujud* or is other than God, is to impose limits on the Divine Being which is unlimited according to all religions, because if it is said that God's Being is separate from the universe, He gets limited. Confronted with this dilemma some thinkers adopted the theory of Immanence and some accepted Transcendence. But in Islam neither Immanence nor Transcendence are correct separately. They are correct collectively. That is to say God is both Immanent and Transcendent. This is the stand taken by ibn Arabi (according to him, God is both Immanent and Transcendent). And this is what *wahdat-ul-wujud* means.

Now the question arises why idolatry is forbidden in Islam when everything in this universe is included in God's Being. The answer is that a part cannot be considered to be the whole. For instance your hand is not you, but is not separate from you either. To worship idols is as ridiculous as someone asking your hand to take money from your pocket in case you are not willing to give it. The truth is that the Infinite Divine Being cannot be contained in a tiny object like an idol or a man or anything like animals, sun, stars, etc. which are being worshipped by the followers of various religions.

In a nutshell, oneness of Being *(wahdat-ul-wujud)* in Islam means that nothing in this world can contain God, but God contains everything. Or nothing is God, but nothing is separate from God. That is why the concept of *hulul* and *ittihad* (incarnation) are against the tenets of Islam. *Hulul* and *ittihad* presuppose multiplicity of being whereas Islam proclaims oneness of Being, that is Divine Being. This concept of God does not violate the principles of *shariat* in any way. What happens in the state of *fana-fi-Allah* is that man does not become God but he is lost in God's Being like an iceberg which when frozen assumes separate existence, and becomes one with the sea when it melts. Similarly, when the seeker is in the state of *fana*, he is one with God and when in *baqa*, he assumes the shape of an iceberg, cold, hard and limited.

That is the reason why the acts done by the Prophet, peace be upon him, were attributed to Allah Almighty Himself and not to the Prophet (s.a.w.). God said:

"Thou didst not throw dust at the enemy, but Allah threw it." [8:17]

But when something of this kind was done by Prophet Daud, peace be upon him, Allah Almighty attributed to him saying:

"Daud Killed Jalut." [2:251]

This is because Daud was in the state of separation (*tafriqa*). So, there is a great difference between what is attributed to man, who is liable to err, and what is attributed to Allah who is above the possibility of error. Therefore, when a supernatural act proceeds from man, it is not considered to be his, it is undoubtedly the act of Allah Almighty. This explains the incidence of miracles and things of that sort. All ordinary happenings are the result of *tafriqa* and all extraordinary happenings are the result of *jama'*.

It was not the action of the Prophet (s.a.w.) when he reached *Qaba Qausain* (God's presence) in one night. It was God's action. Similarly, making true prophecies and going through fire are not ordinary acts. These supernatural deeds are in reality the deeds of God Almighty vouchsafed to his prophets and *auliya* (friends), but He attributes His actions to them and theirs to Himself. That is why their action, their *bai'at*, and their obedience amounts to God's actions, God's *bai'at* and God's obedience. As He has said in the Qur'an:

"Verily those who professed loyalty to thee, professed loyalty to Allah." [48:10], and, "Those who obey the Prophet, obey Allah." [4:80]

The fact is that the *auliya* are united with God inwardly and separated outwardly. That is to say the secrets of friendship are confirmed through union, and the imperatives of servanthood (*ubudiyat*) through separation.

One of the *mashaikh* has said:

I have realised Thee secretly and my tongue is eloquent in Thy praise;
I am in Thee at times and out sometimes;
Although Thy Majesty has veiled Thee from my eyes,
My love has made Thee nearest to my heart.

Here the poet regards inward unity as *jama'* and outward speech as separation. Thus he has affirmed the validity of both *jama'* and *tafriqa* in his own case.

Section

Here I admit my difference of opinion with a section of people who regard the state of *jama'* as denial of state of *tafriqa* because, they think these two terms negate each other. They believe that when man is overpowered by Divine Union his faculties cease to function and therefore he becomes inactive. This is wrong because so long as man lives, he does

not cease to act; more so because *jama'* and *tafriqa* cannot be separated as light cannot be separated from the sun, accident (*ardh*) from the substance (*jauhar*) and quality (*sifat*) from the qualified (*mausuf*). Similarly God's guidance cannot be separated from self-effort, *shariat* from *haqiqat*, attainment (*yaft*) from effort (*talab*). However, it is possible that sometimes Divine Guidance is preceded and sometimes is followed by effort. If Divine Guidance comes after effort, the seeker is afflicted because he begins from the state of separation. But when guidance comes before (or without) effort, he is in peace because he is in the state of presence. Those who negate the necessity of self-effort (to gain guidance) prefer inactivity over activity. It is a serious mistake because if he regards his effort useless, he may reach a point when he will hate even his own good qualities. And when he hates his virtues, his hatred of his vices will be greater.

I have discussed this point because there are some ignorant people who think that nothing is achieved by effort, and therefore all other actions and virtues are useless, that all efforts are futile and that inactivity is better than activity. My answer is that we agree that activity and sitting inactive are both called "action" (*fi'l*) i.e. the act of sitting idle is as much an action as doing something. So when all actions are useless in your eyes, your inactivity (which is also an action) must also be useless. In fact, it should be more useless than activity. This is clear heresy. The difference between a Muslim and a *kafir* is this, that while both of them agree that human actions are defective, the Muslim thinks that activity is better than inactivity, and the *kafir* thinks that inactivity is better than activity. So *jama'* means this, that in the state of union (*jama'*) the imperatives of separation (*tafriqa*) are not ignored. And *tafriqa* is this, that in the state of separation (*tafriqa*), the imperatives of *jama'* (union) are not ignored. Muzayyan Kabir has explained it thus,

"*Jama'* is a speciality and *tafriqa* a servility, both of them being inseparable."

Commentary: This state of affairs is called *jamiyyat* in which the seeker enjoys the pleasures of union and pangs of separation simultaneously as already explained. His power of resistance is so great that he does not get intoxicated in the midst of the storms of union, retains his sobriety and cries for more and more wine of Divine Nearness (union), and goes on fulfilling religious obligations and rituals like a man in the state of separation, so that outwardly there is no sign of his state of *jama'* (*fana*), but inwardly he is drowned in the ocean of oneness and is thoroughly intoxicated without losing his consciousness and goes on attending to the rituals of *shariat* regularly. In this, his nearness (*qurb*) becomes distance (*bu'ad*). Khawaja Ghulam Farid expresses this state of *fana*-cum-*baqa* or union-cum-separation in the following words:

"My condition has undergone two reverses: my *fana* has become *baqa* and *baqa* has become *fana*."

He has also said:

"When nearness becomes distance, the state of union and separation (*fana* and *baqa*) lose their significance. It is then that 'I' ness reigns supreme both at my end and at His end."

Union becomes separation because the storm of love in the lover's heart is so great that his thirst is not satisfied at any stage of nearness, as there being no end to God's being and the stages of His nearness. It is this state of insatiable and ever-increasing thirst in the middle of the river which forced Mirza Bedil to cry out:

O dear Beloved! It is for years that I have been drinking cup after cup
of the wine of Thy union,
But my thirst is not yet satisfied;
How cruel art Thou not to come into my embrace from my embrace!

This, "not coming into my embrace from my embrace," is the result of the state of *jamiyyat* (combination of *fana* and *baqa*), when the lover is not satisfied at any stage of nearness and cries for greater and greater nearness every minute and every moment of his life.

In the above quoted saying of Muzayyan Kabir the word *khasusiyat* (speciality) means the state of *jama'* (*fana*), and *ubudiyat* signifies separation (*tafarqa* or *baqa*). Both of these states are experienced simultaneously.

This is because the chief characteristic of *jama'* is to fulfil the demands of servanthood (such as regularity in performing the rituals of *shariat*), otherwise his state of *jama'* will be imperfect, and he will rank as a false pretender. In that state he will experience no difficulty in performing the rituals of *shariat*. I will now try to elaborate the subject to facilitate understanding.

Know that *jama'* (*fana*) is of two kinds: *jama'-i-salamat* (perfect) and *jama-i-taksir* (imperfect). In *jama'-i-salamat* Allah Almighty gives the seeker strength to be able to overcome the storms of ecstasies and to perform the rituals of *shariat* regularly like Sahl bin Abdullah, Abu Hafs, Haddad, Abul Abbas Sayyari of Merv who are the standard bearers of this school of thought. Abu Yazid Bistami, Abu Bakr Shibli, Abul Hasan Husri and others were always drowned in the state of *fana* (*jama'*), but at the time of daily prayers (*salat*) they would tear themselves out of intoxication of union and perform the prayers after which they would again get absorbed in *fana*. This is because in the event of intoxication of union, the seeker is one with the Divine Being, but Allah Almighty brings him back to the state of sobriety (*ubudiyat*) for two reasons. Firstly, because his status of *ubudiyat* (servanthood) is maintained; and secondly, because *shariat* of Muhammad (s.a.w.) is not desecrated.

In *jama-i-taksir* (imperfect union) he is completely overpowered by ecstasies and raptures so that he is like a maniac (*majnun*). The maniacs also are of two kinds: *mashkur* (praised) and *maadur* (excused); the former's position is better than that of the latter.

Commentary: The former is in his senses and tries to help the people as far as possible, while the latter is indifferent.

In short, the state of *jama'* can neither be called a 'state' (*hal*), nor station (*maqam*). It is just a kind of concentration on the object of one's desire; and some people experience it in states (*ahwal*) and some in stations (*maqamat*). In either case, the desire of the lover is to negate his desire (this is called *namuradi*).

Commentary: Spiritual experience of the kind of *fana* (*jama'*) is called either *hal* (state of fleeting rapture) or *maqam* (or state of permanent rapture). *Hal* comes and goes but *maqam* comes to stay forever. The pilgrim of the former experience is called *maghlubul hal* (overwhelmed by ecstasy) and *ibnul hal* (son of *hal*), while the latter is called *ghalibul hal* (master of ecstasy) and *abul hal* (father of ecstasy). The former is called *sahibi talwin* (man of caprice), while the latter is called *sahibi takwin* (man of stability). In either case, the desire of the pilgrim is desirelessness or contentment (called *namuradi).* A poet says:

"I had my desire fulfilled by not desiring for anything."

Another has said:

"If you want your desire to be fulfilled, cease to desire anything," meaning, stop exercising your will or choice and resign to the will of the Lord.

Sarmad, a thoroughly God intoxicated poet says:

O Sarmad! Do not sell the sorrows of love for happiness,
thy pangs of passion with happiness;
If thou art grieved, proclaim it not;
Even if luck favours thee a thousand times,
never leave desirelessness for once.

It is a well known saying:

"*Tafarqa* is separation and *jama'* is union."

This holds good in all such cases: For instance, Hadhrat Ya'qub, peace be upon him, had focused (*jama'*) his attention on nothing but his son Hadhrat Yusuf, peace be upon him; and Majnun had concentrated his attention on nothing but his beloved Layla; and everything in the universe except Layla had ceased to exist for him. There are so many examples of this kind. Once Abu Yazid was sitting in his house when someone came and shouted: "Is Abu Yazid at home?" His reply was, "Is there anybody in this house except Allah?"

Once a dervish went to Makkah. When he visited Ka'bah, he remained there for one year without eating and drinking anything, and without sleeping and answering the call of nature. This is because Allah has exalted the Ka'bah by saying: "It is my house" and this relationship (*nisbat*) of the Ka'bah with the Divine Lord intoxicated him so much that he went without food and drink for a whole year.

The thing is that Allah Almighty distributed the priceless pearls of His love among His friends, and then He apportioned that love to their various senses (e.g. *qalb, ruh, sirr, khafi* etc.) in accordance with their capacity. Thereafter, He covered those portions of love with the curtains of humanity, nature, temperament and spirit, till, its irresistible force turns their whole being into love and all their actions and deeds and looks all governed by love. This state is called *jama'*. Hussain ibn Mansur's outburst in that state may be seen in the following verses:

Here am I ! Here am I !
O My Lord, O my Master, Here am I !
O my desire, O my purpose, O my life, O my spirit,
O my destination, O my cries, O my cravings, O my gestures,
O my body, O my soul, O my hearing and sight,
O my whole, O my skeleton, O my limbs !

This is because he lives by God, breathes by God, loses his existence in God, he turns away from other than God and looks to nothing but God.

A section of the scholars enamoured of linguistic subtleties and scholarly niceties prefer to call this state as *jama'-al-jama'* (union of union). This is a good expression in so far as the language goes. But it is better not to give *jama'* the name of *jama'*. This is because the word *jama'* (union) pre-supposes *tafriqa* (separation). That is to say, union took place because there was separation before, while the fact is that union does not change. This statement is, therefore, misleading. To one who is united there is nothing except one. Do you not see that the Prophet, peace be upon him, was presented everything in the universe during the Night of Ascension, but he paid no heed to it, since he was one with One. How can he who is united with God see anything other than God. That is why God said at that occasion:

"Neither did his gaze deviate nor did it stray." [53:17]

In my earlier days I wrote a book called "*Al Bayano l'Ahlil Ayan*" on this subject. I have also discussed it at length in my book "*Jadhbul Qulub*" in the chapter on *jama'* which I do not want to repeat here for the sake of brevity.

This is in brief the doctrine of Sayyariyah order which is one of the genuine and popular schools of Sufism. I will now expose the false notions of a section of the heretics who try to substantiate their erroneous theories by misquoting the Sufi master to conceal their ignominy, so that the aspiring *murids* are warned and saved from going astray. All guidance is in the hands of Allah Almighty.

Section

The Hululiyah Sect
(The Reincarnationists)

Allah Almighty has said:

"What is other than Truth is heresy. So why do you exceed limits?"

One of the two damned (*matrud*) sects which pretends belief in Sufism, is allegedly the follower of Abu Hulman of Damascus. But the statements attributed to him by these people are different from those given in the authentic Sufi text in which he is regarded as a *majdhub* (drowned in ecstasy), but these heretics have the audacity to ascribe reincarnationism (*hulul*), admixture (*imtizaj*) and transmigration of souls to him.

However, I have seen in one of the books of the earlier *mashaikh* some statements against him, which are contrary to what the orthodox theologies maintain. God knows better.

The people of the second sect base their theories on the sayings of Faris who is alleged to be of the school of thought of Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj. But nobody, except this sect, thinks that Hussain bin Mansur held these views. I myself have seen Abu Ja'far Saidlani, at the head of four thousand followers scattered in Iraq, who was a staunch adherent of Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj, and condemned Faris. His books too do not contain anything but truth. And I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi say that I do not know who Faris and Abu Hulman were, and what they said. But whoever says anything which violates the tenet of *shariat* is misguided. Islam is the root and Sufism (*tasawwuf*) is the tree. How can the tree flourish when the root is not sound? For miraculous deeds (*mu'jizat*) and genuine revelations (*kashf*) are not vouchsafed to anyone except those who are true adherents of *shariat*. These renegades base their conclusions on erroneous concepts of the human soul. I will now explain the true significance of man's soul in accordance with *shariat* and point out the mistakes and misconceptions of the heretics for your guidance. May Allah help you.

Discourse on the Human Soul (*Ruh)*

In order to understand what *ruh* is, man stands in need of knowledge (*ilm*), for his own intellect is unable to comprehend its subtle nature.

Commentary: By outer knowledge it is meant knowledge from a higher source because man's own intelligence is extremely limited. Man's knowledge depends on his five senses i.e. hearing, seeing, etc., which are limited. So how can knowledge be unlimited when its sources are limited.

The *ulama* (theologians) and *hukama* (thinkers) of the *ummah* as well as the non-Muslims have said something about it according to their imagination and conjectures. When the Jews at the instigation of the unbelieving Quraish of Makkah, sent Nasr bin al-Harith to ask the Prophet, peace be upon him, to explain the nature and reality of *ruh*, Allah Almighty had, beforehand, informed him about it saying:

"They will ask Thee about the *ruh* (soul)." [17:85]

Then God Almighty, denying the eternity of the soul, said:

"Say *ruh* is the creation of my Lord." [17:85]

Commentary: Some *ulama* particularly the *mashaikh* have said that the word *'amr'* in the above *ayat* means *alam-i-amr* (the domain of Divinity) as opposed to *alam-i-khalaq* (the domain of created things). They base their argument on the *ayat:*

"To Him belongs the domain of *amr* and *khalq*."

This shows that the domain of *amr* is something different from the domain of creation or created things which we call the universe (*kainat*). In that case, the *ruh* would rank as uncreated (*ghair makhluq*) or eternal like the Holy Qur'an which is the word of God or the manifestation of His Attribute *'kalam'*. In the wide ranging controversy about the Holy Qur'an's being created or uncreated, the renegade sect Mu'tazilah maintained that the Qur'an was created which was vehemently opposed by the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* who rightly believed that the Holy Qur'an being Allah's Attribute of *'al kalam'* was uncreated (eternal). The *ayat*:

"So I blew into him [Adam] out of My soul," [15:29],

also indicates that the *ruh* blown into Adam was of Divine origin, and hence eternal. But according to the Hadith:

"The first thing created by God was my [Prophet Muhammad's] *nur* and everything was created out of my *nur*."

The Holy Prophet's *nur* was created by God Almighty and everything else including all the angels, all the souls and everything in the universe was created out of the Prophet's *nur*. In that case, the human soul ranks among one of the created things and our author is right in saying that the *ruh* is not eternal but created.

The angels and paradise and hell which will remain forever cannot be called *qadim* because they were created at a certain time. *Qadim* is Allah (s.w.t). alone who has no beginning and end.

The Prophet, peace be upon him has also said:

"The souls are like armies gathered together. Those which are familiar with one another [in the soul world] like one another in this world and those who do not associate amongst each other do not like one another."

So there are many such proofs about the existence of the soul without any description of its nature. A class of the *ulama* have said:

"The soul is the life by which bodies live."

A section of scholastics also favour this view, that is to say that the soul is an instrument by which God Almighty keeps us alive; and that sexual activity, procreation, and other similar activities which change human beings from one state to another are the result thereof. Another section of thinkers have said:

"It is not life, but is never found without life like the spirit which does not exist without the object. They are never separated as pain and the knowledge of pain cannot be separated."

Commentary: Does it die with the human body at the time of death, or is it the body which dies and not the soul? Various Ahadith as well as *ayat* of the Holy Qur'an show that at the time of death, it is the body which dies, while the soul is transported to *alam-i-arwah* or the soul world called Barzakh where it remains till the Day of Resurrection, when our bodies are resurrected and taken out of the grave for rendering accounts of the deeds committed in this world. Thereafter good

people are sent to paradise and bad ones to hell forever. This also shows that the human soul does not perish at bodily death or at any other stage and that it lives in paradise or in hell. The conclusion is that the human soul is created and not eternal. It is only Allah Almighty who is Eternal, because Eternal (*qadim*) means one who has no beginning. But the human soul has a beginning. It came into being when it was created. It is of Divine origin in accordance with the *ayat*:

"I blew into him out of my soul." [15:29]

But it came into being i.e. assumed a separate entity at a later date and what comes into being at some point is NOT *qadim*. It is Allah who is *qadim*. Our author is therefore right in saying that the human soul is not *qadim*. It may live for ever in paradise or hell, but it cannot be called *qadim*.

This also shows that the soul is an accident (*ardh*) [i.e. that which cannot subsist independantly,] not substance (*jauhar)*. But a vast majority of *mashaikh* together with most of the *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* maintain that the soul is an essence (*aini*), not an attribute; and that so long as it is with the body Allah Almighty keeps the body alive, and that life is man's attribute by which he lives, and that the soul may be separated from the body while the body is alive like in sleep, when it leaves the body but the body is still alive.

But intelligence and knowledge cannot function when the soul departs. The Prophet, peace be upon him, has also said that the souls of martyrs take the form of birds. This shows that the soul is necessarily an essence. Moreover, when the Prophet (s.a.w.) says that souls are like armies gathered together, it follows that the soul is an essence and not an attribute, because an attribute cannot subsist by itself. In fact, the soul is a subtle body (*jism-i-latif)* which comes and goes under the commands of Allah Almighty. Furthermore, the Prophet, peace be upon him has said, "During the night of Ascension (*Mi'raj*) I saw Adam Safi Allah, Yusuf Siddiq Allah, Musa Kalimullah, Harun Halimullah, Isa Ruhullah and Ibrahim Khalilullah, peace be upon them, in the Heavens. Obviously he saw the souls of these prophets in the Heavens. So if the soul were an attribute, it could not possibly subsist by itself and could not be seen by the Prophet (s.a.w.). If the soul had been an attribute it would have needed an essence to become its attribute. It, therefore, follows that the soul is a subtle body which can only be seen by the spiritual and not physical eyes, and can also assume the form of the birds, and move together like flocks of birds as stated in the books on Hadith, and also in the Holy Qur'an: "The soul is the creation of my Lord." [17:85].

The question remains, "What about the view point of the heretics who regard the soul as eternal (*qadim*) and worship it, and regard it as an uncreated motive behind all activity

and think that it passes from one body to another?" No agnostic dogma has gained so much popularity as this. The whole Christian community holds this view although in varying terms. All the Hindus and natives of China and Tibet, the majority of the Shias, the Qaramtiya and the Batiniya entertain similar beliefs. And the two renegade sects mentioned in the forthcoming pages hold similar views. All the people mentioned above, have this question (eternity of the soul) upper most in their minds and come up with their own arguments.

I ask them: "What do you mean by eternity (*qadim*)? Do you say that the souls is *muhdith* which came into being prior to all created things, or was it always there (like God)?" If they say it is *muhdith* having come into existence prior to all beings, then they agree with us, and the difference of opinion disappears because we also believe that such were created before bodies came into existence as the Prophet, peace be upon him, has said:

"Allah created the souls two hundred thousand years before the bodies."

When it is proven that the soul is *muhdith*, it is like all *muhdith* beings, the question of being created before or after does not arise. In principle, all beings belong to one and the same category. Allah Almighty unites one category of his creation with another kind of creation, and, through this union creates life by His unlimited powers. That is to say, the soul is one kind and the body is another kind of creation. When God unites them together human life comes into being. But transmigration of the same soul from one body to another is untenable, because, as a body cannot have two souls, a soul also cannot have two bodies. If these facts were not supported by the sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who always spoke the truth, and the matter was considered purely on logical grounds, then the soul would be nothing but life in which case it becomes an attribute and not an essence.

If, however, they hold the soul to be *qadim*, I ask them, "Is it self-existent or depends on anybody else for existence?" If they say it is self-existent, I ask them, "Is it the God of the universe or not?" If they say it is not the God of the universe, it means there are two *qadims* which is illogical, because the *qadim* is an Infinite Being and two infinite beings cannot logically coexist (because the infinite is unlimited and two infinite beings are bound to limit one another).

If they say that the soul is the God of the universe, then, I say, it becomes *qadim* (eternal) and the bodies are *hadith* (non-*qadim*). But the fact is that it is impossible for the *qadim* (soul) to become combined (*imtazaj*) with the non-*qadim* (material body), or to get merged in it (*hulul*), or to contain it (*makan*), or to carry it (*hamal*). This is because union and separation is possible only for homogeneous material and non-*qadim* objects. Spirituality is indivisible:

"Allah Almighty is far above that."

If they say the soul is not self-existent, and depends on something else for existence, then it is either an attribute (*sifat*) or accident (*ardh*) [i.e. that which cannot subsist independently.] If they say it is an accident, then it is bound to have a ground to exist or be without a ground. If it has a ground, the ground must be like itself (material and transient). If it is without a ground, no accident can stand without a ground. In either case, it is not *qadim*.

If like the Hululis (Incarnationists) and the Transmigrationists, they say it is an attribute, that is to say an attribute of God, it is logically impossible for the eternal attribute of God to become the attribute of a created thing; because if the life of the eternal can become the attribute of the non-eternal, then all the powers of the eternal can be the powers of the non-eternal (*muhdith*) which is an impossibility (*mohal*). The attributes of the *qadim* (eternal) cannot be the attribute of the non-eternal (*muhdith*). It, therefore, follows that the eternal has absolutely no connection with the non-eternal whatsoever, and what the heretics maintain is falsehood. The soul (*ruh*) is a created thing (*makhluq*) and is under God's command. He who has contrary beliefs is grossly mistaken, and is unable to distinguish the eternal from the non-eternal. It is not possible for a *wali* (saint) to be ignorant of the attributes of Allah Almighty. I am extremely thankful to the Divine Lord who has saved us from erroneous beliefs and false notions, and has bestowed upon us the intelligence to judge, and the faith to know Him, knowing well that my gratitude is limited and cannot be equal to His unlimited Grace.

But it is a pity that when the people who can see only the exterior *(ahli zahir)*, hear stories (about the false notions of the pretenders), they think that the Sufis hold such beliefs, and therefore, their doubts and suspicions do not allow them to see the beauty of spiritual knowledge, the excellence of Divine Friendship (*wilayat-i-haq*) and the brilliance of Divine Light vouchsafed to the *auliya-Allah* who are not at all concerned about it, since they regard merit as reproach and reproach as merit.

Section

One of the shaikhs has said: "The soul in the body is like the fire in the fireplace. So both fire and fireplace are created things (*makhluq*)."

And only Almighty Allah and His attributes are eternal. Out of all the *mashaikh*, Abu Bakr Wasiti is most eloquent about the nature of the soul. He says:

"The souls are at ten places."

Commentary: Obviously the souls here means the souls of those who have passed away.

1. The souls of the sinners (*mufsidin*) which are clouded in darkness and do not know what is going to befall them.

2. The souls of the pious (*parsa*) which are in the first heaven enjoying the fruits of their worship and good deeds and go about with strength thereof.

3. The souls of aspirants (*muridan*) which are in the fourth heaven who, by virtue of their sincerity (*sidq*) and piety are happy in the company of the angels.

4. The souls of the generous (*ahli manan*) which live under the candles of Divine Light hanging down the Throne of the Almighty. Their food is love and drink is God's intimacy and presence.

5. The souls of the faithful (*ahli wafa*) which are charmed by the states of purity (*safa*) and Divine Acceptance (*istifa*).

6. The souls of martyrs which live in the gardens of paradise in the form of birds and fly from place to place.

7. The souls of the lovers (*mushtakan*) which sit calmly and gracefully clad in the bright garments of Divine Attributes.

8. The souls of the Gnostics (*arifin*) which live in Divine Presence and hear Divine Words day and night; and move about in the paradise as well as this world freely.

9. The souls of the Friends (*dostan*) of God which are drowned in the vision of Divine Beauty and Divine Revelation and do not rest with anything else.

10. The souls of the Dervishes (*darveshan*) which have attained Divine Nearness to the extent of complete *fana* (annihilation) in the Divine Being, and having been attributed with Divine Attributes, find marvellous elevation in their spiritual status.

It is related in the accounts of the Sufi *mashaikh* that they have seen the human soul in various shapes and forms. It is quite correct, because as stated above, the soul does exist in a subtle form *(jismi latif)* and Allah Almighty shows it to his faithful servants in whatever form He likes.

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi say that the whole of my life is by God, my very existence is by God, I am alive by God and not by His Essence and Attributes as erroneously believed by the heretics. One of the gravest errors of these people is that they regard the soul as eternal (*qadim*) in varying terms. One of their sects call it breath and matter (*nafs-o-hayula*), another calls it light and darkness (*nur-o-zulmat*).

And the renegade Sufis use the words *fana* and *baqa*, or *jama'* and *tafarqa* to camouflage their errors and adorn their heresies. But the Sufi shaikhs disown these heretics and maintain that true *wilayat* (sainthood) and real love of God is not possible without *ma'rifat* (knowledge of Divine Essence and Attributes). Those who cannot distinguish *qadim* (eternal) from *hadith* (transient), are steeped in ignorance and nobody believes in what they say. I have dealt with the two misguided sects in the last two sections briefly.

Further details may be looked up in my books on the subject. I will now unveil the mysteries of Divine gnosticism (*ma'rifat*), and substantiate various doctrines of Sufism by logical reasoning so that the reader may be able to understand them properly, and those in suspense may be rightly guided, and so that I may be blessed and rewarded by the grace of God Almighty.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Lifting of the First Veil: Regarding *Ma'rifat* of Allah (Gnosis)

Allah Ta'ala has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"They do not venerate Allah as He ought to be." [22:74]

The Prophet, peace be upon him has said:

"If you knew Allah as He ought to be known, you would walk over the seas; and the mountains would move by your prayers."

Ma'rifat is of two kinds: *ma'rifat-i-ilmi* (theoretical), and *ma'rifat-i-hali* (spiritual experience). The theoretical knowledge of God leads to all the virtues of this world and the next. Cognition (*shanakht*) of God is the most important thing in the world. Allah has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"I have not created the *jins* and mankind except to worship Me, i.e. to recognise Me." [51:56]

Commentary: Ibn Abbas, the famous companion and cousin of the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, has said that the word: *l'ya'bodun* in the Qur'an really means *l'ya'rifun*. For worship in the real sense is not possible without knowing God and

His Attributes (*dhat-o-sifat*). As a matter of fact, *'l'ya'bodun'* means to reach the spiritual stage of *ubudiyat* or *abdiyat* which is the final stage of perfection and is attained after the seeker (*salik*) has been through the stages of *fana-fi-Allah* and has been attributed with Divine Attributes which is another name for *ma'rifat*.

That is why ibn Abbas said that the word *l'ya'bodun* really means *l'ya'rifun* i.e. to reach the stage of *abdiyat* or descent from *fana-fi-Allah* to *baqa-bi-Allah*. That is also the reason why our author has said that *ma'rifat-i-ilmi* (theoretical knowledge of God) is less important that *ma'rifat-i-hali* i.e. when the seeker has been through the stages of *fana-fi-Allah* and assimilated God's Attributes. Here the reader may be reminded that this clarification of the above verse of the Holy Qur'an on the part of Hadhrat Abdullah ibn Abbas is another instance of the fact that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) and his companions upheld the esoteric and not the exoteric version of Islam; and in fact Islam signifies the spiritual experience of extreme nearness and the presence of the Almighty which the later spiritualists of Islam *(auliya)* preferred to term as *fana-fi-Allah, baqa-bi-Allah, ma'rifat* and *haqiqat*.

So most Muslims neglect this aspect of Islam except those whom Allah Almighty has exalted and saved from the darkness of this world and rejuvenated them by His Grace like Umar ibn al-Khattab (r.a.) as related in the Qur'an,

"And We provided him with light with which he goes about among the people." [6:122]

And regarding Abu Jahl, the curses of God be upon him, Allah Ta'ala said:

"He is like the one wandering in darkness never to come out." [6:122]

So *ma'rifat* is the vivification of man in God and heedlessness of other than God. Everybody's worth is measured by the extent of his *ma'rifat*, and he who has no *ma'rifat* is worthless. According to the theologians (*ulama*) and the jurists *(fuqaha)* and others, true knowledge of God is *ma'rifat;* but according to the *mashaikh* of Islam, true spiritual experience *(hal)* of God's nearness and union is *ma'rifat*. They maintain that *ma'rifat* (gnosis) ranks higher than *ilm* (knowledge), because true experience (*hal*, *sihat-i-hal*) is not possible without true knowledge (*sihat-i-ilm*) but true knowledge is not true experience (*hal*).

In other words, he who has no knowledge of God cannot be an *arif* (gnostic), but he who has knowledge does not necessarily become an *arif*. That is the reason why opposing groups of people got entangled in useless controversies, each falsifying the other. I will now explain the real significance of the term *ma'rifat* for the benefit of both the sects by Allah's grace.

Section

You, may Allah bless you, should know that there is a great controversy raging among people with regard to knowledge and Gnosis *(ilmu-ma'rifat)*. The Mu'tazilah say that the *ma'rifat* of God is based on intelligence (*aql*), and that none except a man of intelligence can be an *arif* (gnostic). This is wrong because unintelligent people can also be *arifin*. Children who are not perfectly intelligent cannot be excluded from the pale of *iman*. If *ma'rifat* were intellectual, the non-intellectuals would not have been *arifin* and the heretics (*kafirin*) who have intelligence would not have been infidels. Moreover, if intelligence were a precondition of *ma'rifat*, every intelligent person would have been an *arif* and every unintelligent person would have been a *kafir* which is grossly incorrect.

There is another class which assert, that logical reasoning (*istadlal*) is the precondition of *ma'rifat*, and it cannot be attained without the power of reasoning. The example of Iblis is enough to refute this view, because Iblis had seen enough in the form of Paradise and Hell, Divine Throne and Chair (*arsh-o-kursi*), etc. but all these proofs did not help him gain *ma'rifat*. Moreover, Allah has said:

"If we had sent angels to them [i.e. the non-believers], and made the dead talk to them, and made all the invisible things visible to them, they would not have believed, except when Allah willed them to believe." [6:111]

This shows that Allah's will is the precondition for *ma'rifat* and not revelations (seeing angels, etc.) and logical reasoning, etc. If the latter had been a precondition, then Allah would not have declared His will as a precondition for *ma'rifat*. The conclusion of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* however, is that reasoning and revelations can be called the means and facilities but not precondition, which is nothing but Divine Will and Divine Grace without which intelligence is blind. For, intelligence is ignorant about its own reality, and no philosopher or thinker has ever been able to comprehend Divine Essence and Attributes (except by Divine Revelations). When intelligence *(aql)* is ignorant about itself, how can it comprehend things other than itself.

Moreover, in the absence of God's will and grace, even human reasoning can go wrong, and witnessing invisible things can be misunderstood, since most of the heretics who are very good at logical reasoning, have gone wrong, and are not gnostics (*arif*). But those who are the recipients of Divine Grace have their efforts concentrated on *ma'rifat*; when they indulge in reasoning their aim is nothing but love (*talab*) for God, and when they refrain from reasoning their aim is nothing but resignation (*taslim*) to the will of God. So far as true *ma'rifat* is concerned, resignation is not better than love, since love is full of excitement and activity which are lacking in resignation. But actually, *ma'rifat* depends neither on love nor on resignation. It depends purely on Divine Will, and Divine Grace,

and not on intelligence and logical reasoning. Allah Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"If the infidels are made to return to this world, they would do what they did before." [6:28]

This shows that even after seeing what they saw in the next world, such a punishment and God's existence would not lead them to the right path. When Amirul Mu'minin Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, was questioned about *ma'rifat*, he said:

"I have known Allah by Allah, and other than Allah by His light (*Nur*)."

Commentary: The *arifin* (gnostics) say that he who uses only his reasoning power to know God is a polytheist (*mushryk*) since it is not possible to comprehend the Infinite by the finite and what is comprehended by his limited reason cannot be God who is unlimited. God thus conceived, is the creation of his own limited brain. In other words, it is a statue created by his own mind and therefore he is a polytheist not a *muwahhid* (Unitarian). This is what *Amirul Mu'minin* Ali, may Allah be pleased with him, means by saying, "I have known Allah by Allah, and other than Allah by His light." This means that we can know God only when He informs us about Himself through His Messengers and Revealed Books. This does not mean that human reason and logic do not play a part in knowing God. What logical reasoning can tell us is that since every effect is the result of a cause, in other words, since the law of causality reigns supreme in the universe, the universe cannot come into existence by itself. It needs a cause or a creator to come into existence and that cause is the will and power of God Almighty. Even Karl Marx who is supposed to be the father of Godless communism has said that he believes the universe is scientific and is controlled and run by a highly intelligent creative force which he prefers to call NATURE. But what he calls Nature we call God. The difference in nomenclature does not matter. Logic can only tell us that there is certainly a Creator of the universe. But it cannot go any further. It cannot tell us what the Creator is like. What is His nature? How is He related to Creation? How is He related to man? How can man approach Him and so on? This information about God is supplied by God Himself through His prophets and revealed books. The second and more advanced meaning of Hadhrat Ali's statement: "I know Allah by Allah," has been elaborated by Maulana Rum in the following verse of his *Mathnavi*:

"The sun is the proof of the sun. If you want a proof thereof do not turn your eyes from it."

But that is possible only at the advanced stages of spiritual progress when the lover sees God in everything, and some lucky souls are born like that. This seeing of God in everything in spiritual terminology is known as *'ain-ul-yaqin'* (conviction

based on seeing), while knowing God through logical reasoning and the evidence of the prophets is known as *'ilm-ul-yaqin'* (conviction based on evidence). There is, however, the third, the highest and the strongest proof of God's being in Islam called *'haq-ul-yaqin'* (conviction based on personal spiritual experience called *fana-fi-Allah)*. In other words, the stage of belief in God of the category of *ilm-ul-yaqin* is that of a man who has heard that fire burns; of *ain-ul-yaqin* is that of a man who has seen with his own eyes, wood being burnt by fire; while the stage of conviction of the category of *haq-ul-yaqin* is that of a man who puts his hand in fire. This is what is meant by Hadhrat Ali (r.a.) when he said:

"I know Allah by Allah."

God Almighty created the body and made it to live by the soul. But God created the soul to live by God. So when the body cannot live by reason and seeing invisible things, how can the soul live by these things? Allah Almighty has said:

"He was dead and we gave him life." [6:122]

This means He is the only life giver. He has also said:

"We created for him light with which he walks about." [6:122]

That is to say that God is the creator of the light (soul) by which man lives. He has also said:

"He whose soul is illuminated by Allah, lives by his Lord's light."

In this verse also Allah has referred to Himself as the illumination of the mind. In the following verse He attributes the darkening of the soul also to Himself. He says:

"Allah has sealed their hearts, ears and eyes." [2:7]

He has also said:

"Do not obey those whose *qalb* we have deprived from Our remembrance."

So when expansion and contraction, and illumination and darkening of hearts is in the hands of God, who else can be our guide. For, everything other than God is merely a means (*asbab*) which cannot guide unless accompanied by His Grace (*inayat*). The veils mislead rather than lead. Allah has also said:

"Allah bestowed on you *iman* and beautified your heart with it."

Here also He has attributed beautification and adornment of hearts to Himself. And piety (*taqwa*) which is another name for *ma'rifat* is also in His hands, and the pious do not have the prerogative to either accept nor reject it. Therefore, man is unable to gain *ma'rifat* without Divine Grace. As Abul Hasan Nuri says:

"There is nothing to guide you to Allah except Allah Himself. As for knowledge, it only tells you how to worship."

That is to say, knowledge leads you to serve and not to know God. No one in the world has the power to enable you to reach God. No logician can be wiser than Abu Talib (the Prophet's uncle) and no guide can be greater than Prophet Muhammad, peace be upon him; but when Abu Talib was not destined to be guided, the guidance of Muhammad was of no avail to him. The very first step of logical reasoning leads one away from God, because reasoning involves thinking of everything other than God, while *ma'rifat* is turning away from everything other than God. Ordinarily all objects are achieved through reasoning, but the achievement of *ma'rifat* is uniquely beyond reasoning. *Ma'rifat* is attained by Divine Grace, not by man's effort since the way to *ma'rifat* is not through effort. It is through God's will. It is through the illumination of the hearts by unseen hands. Everything besides God is transient (*muhdith*) and can only achieve what is transient like itself but not God who is *qadim* (eternal) and not transient. If God is achieved through the transient (non-eternal) He becomes subservient to the one who achieves Him and becomes overpowered by him, which is illogical. Excellence (*karamat*) does not lie in subjugating the Divine Being, but it lies in subjugating one's self to the Divine Being and losing one's own being through Divine Grace.

In the former case *ma'rifat* becomes a theory, while in the latter case it becomes practice (actual experience of *fana-fi-Allah*).

Another sect regards reason (*aql*) as the cause of *ma'rifat*. We ask them, "What degree of *ma'rifat* has intelligence been able to bring about in your case?" Whereas the fact is that what intelligence provides is negated by *ma'rifat*. That is to say that the conception of God conceived by human intellect is quite different from what He is in reality.

How can it be possible for human intellect to gain *ma'rifat* through logical reasoning? Intellect and agnosticism (*wahm*) are homogeneous. Once we accept this hypothesis, gnosis and agnosticism become synonymous which is logically impossible. Therefore, to prove the existence of God by logical reasoning is idolatry (*tashbih*) and to reject it is denial (*taatil*) or atheism. It cannot be anything else, and both these notions are far from *ma'rifat*. Therefore, idolaters (*mushabbah*) and atheists (*muatlalah*) are far removed from the unitarians (*muwahhid*).

When human intellect went as far as it could, and realised that what it found was nothing but fantasy, the lovers of God resorted to pure submission and humility to the Divine Lord to find some balm for their burning hearts. Since they were not aware of the various

paths leading to their destination nor did they have the capacity to reach it, God's grace came to their help and guided them to His presence where they were blessed with Divine love and bliss, and their souls were beautified by Divine Nearness. When the intellect (*aql*) saw that the soul had reached its destination, it tried to exert itself but failed to reach that position, and when it failed, it was bewildered and became helpless. And it was due to that state of helplessness that the Almighty assigned to it the role of worship, and said, "When you tried to approach Me by your power of reasoning you were veiled by it. And now that your energies have been exhausted and you have realised your helplessness; this realisation is your success." God Almighty, therefore, blessed the soul with His nearness (*qurb*), and the intellect (*aql*) with His worship. This is what *ma'rifat* is.

Commentary: Since the limited human intellect is unable to fathom Divine Mysteries, Divine Essence, Divine Attributes and Divine Works, the task of knowing God should be assigned to, and be accomplished by the human soul which has vast potentialities, and is capable of reaching Divine nearness and presence. This is the crux of *ma'rifat*.

This is how God Almighty takes His servant to the realm of His cognition and *ma'rifat*. But this cognition is not dependent on the human faculty of reasoning, but on the realisation that the seeker himself is a nonentity, and that his egoism (*ananiyat*) is infidelity. It is then that his nearness gets constant, his life perfect and his *ma'rifat* is not theoretical but actual experience.

There are others who assert that God's *ma'rifat* is inspirational (*ilhami*). This also is untenable because it is through *ma'rifat* that you can distinguish right from wrong, while those who depend on inspiration are unable to do so. One says that he had the inspiration that God is limited, while another says that his inspiration told him that He is unlimited. But both these contradictory statements cannot be true, only one can. So how can one decide which is true and which is not. What is needed here is proof so that truth is distinguished from falsehood. Therefore the theory that *ma'rifat* is inspirational is incorrect. It is held by the Brahmins and the mystics (*Ilhamian* or occultists).

I have seen a class of extremists who pin their belief on *ilham* and try to pass for pious Muslims. But they are thoroughly misguided and their claims are rejected both by the Muslim and non-Muslim thinkers. This is because ten inspirationalists come out with ten contradictory claims which is enough to falsify all of them. If they say that whatever is repugnant to *shariat* is not *ilham*, then I say that they contradict themselves because on the one hand they claim that *shariat* depends on inspiration and on the other hand they say that inspiration which is against *shariat* is not correct. It, therefore, follows that *ma'rifat* depends on *shariat* or *nabuwwat* (prophethood) and not on inspiration, and that inspiration (*ilham*) cannot be the criterion for *ma'rifat*.

There are others who maintain that *ma'rifat* of God is intuitive (natural). This is also untenable because if knowledge is dependent on intuition, all thinking persons must be unanimous in their views about the knowledge of God, whereas we find them opposed to one another. Some have committed the mistake of idol worshipping *(tashbih)* while others deny His existence *(taatil)*. It is, therefore, established that *ma'rifat* is not intuitive. Moreover, if the *ma'rifat* of God were intuitive, no effort (*taklif)* would have been necessary to achieve it, since no effort is necessary to get what is already there and men would not have been worried about the acquisition of knowledge of the earth, the skies, day and night, pains and pleasures and, above all, knowledge about themselves, and so on. And nobody could have been ignorant about these things even if he had wanted to.

There is a section of Sufis too who share this view and maintain that God's *ma'rifat* is *a priori* or intuitive. This is because when they did not have any doubts in their minds they became confused and what was certainty (*yaqin*) was given the name of intuition. Although they are right in principle, their way of expression is wrong because if knowledge of God is intuitive all thinking persons must be equally cognisant (*arif*) which is not the case. Another characteristic of intuition is that it occurs in the mind without effort while *ma'rifat* of the Creator is the result of effort coupled with Divine Grace. However, Master Abu Ali Daqqaq, Shaikh Abu Sahl Sa'luki and his father who is known as the *imam* and shaikh of Nishapur maintain that the beginning of *ma'rifat* is through reasoning and the end is intuitive like technical knowledge which is first acquired by effort and later on becomes intuitive. This is in accordance with the opinion of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* who say that knowledge of God in paradise is intuitive. If it is intuitive there, why can it not be the same in this world.

They also say that the prophets, peace be on them, who hear God's words directly or through the angels or by means of *wahy* (revelation) do so intuitively. I agree that those who abide in paradise will know God intuitively (automatically) because paradise is not a place of tests and trials *(taklif)* like this world. So far as the prophets are concerned, they too are immune from damnation and disunion *(qatiyat)*. This is the case of those who know God intuitively or who are not liable to be damned or disunited. But *iman* (faith) and *ma'rifat* (gnosis) have significance only when the truth is kept hidden (*ghaib*). If the truth is revealed, *iman* becomes inevitable (*jabr*), and the question of acceptance or rejection of religion does not arise. This destroys the very foundation of religion, and the question of opposition to infidelity becomes unnecessary and damnation of the Devil, and the heresy of Balaam and Barsissa no longer remain. But the fact is that they were gnostics (*arif*) in the beginning, but were damned by disobedience to God. Iblis's disobedience stands confirmed by God in the Holy Qur'an. He says:

"Satan said I swear by Thy Glory I will mislead all mankind." [38:82]

Commentary: Balaam Baur and Barsissa are two legendary saints who fell victim to lust and lost their sainthood.

Satan's understanding of the Divine Command and his final rejection of it bear testimony to the fact that he was a gnostic in the beginning. The fact that he was damned shows that he was guilty of disobedience. Had he not been guilty he would not have been damned. Had his knowledge been intuitive (*zazuri* or natural) he would not have disobeyed.

Now, since this question is extremely subtle, you need not go deep into it, and in order to save yourself from the danger of disbelief, you should know that God's knowledge and *ma'rifat* depends on His guidance and will. It is, however, possible that people's belief (*yaqin*) in God's *ma'rifat* may vary (according to individual capacity); but *ma'rifat* itself is constant and does not increase or decrease. Therefore *ma'rifat* is a thing which cannot be copied from this saint or that. The only basis for *ma'rifat* is to know Him through His Glorious Attributes, and this is possible only by the Grace and Benevolence of God who has complete control on our intelligence and reasoning. If He likes, He can guide you by one of His actions, or He can cause the same action to be a veil and mislead you. Hadhrat Isa, peace be upon him, was a source of guidance for some people who found their way to *ma'rifat* through him and at the same time a source of misguidance for others, so that the former said that he was a servant of God and the latter said he was the son of God. Similarly, some people found evidence of God in idols, the sun and the moon, while others started worshipping them and were led astray. It, therefore, follows that if logical reasoning were a true guide, every thinking person would have been an *arif* (Gnostic) which is absurd. So it is God Almighty who is the real guide. He makes everything in the world a vehicle or a guide to reach Him, and know Him. This shows that logical reasoning is only the means (*sabab*) and not the cause (*illat*) of gnosis (*ma'rifat*) and is by no means superior to another in showing the way to God who is the Creator of all means (*asbab*).

In fact, the theory of causation in respect of God is heretical and dependence on anything other than God is polytheism (*shyrk*).

Commentary: As already explained, proving the existence of God by logical reason is *shyrk* (polytheism) because the human mind/brain is limited and cannot possibly comprehend the Unlimited Being and neither can the Infinite be contained by the finite. It is true there are numerous *ayat* (verses) in the Holy Qur'an in which mankind has been exhorted to look at the sun, the moon, the stars, the skies, the day and the night; all of which cannot come into existence without the Creator. But these things can only indicate that there is a Creator but do not enable us to know Him properly and understand His Nature, His Attributes, and His Essence, etc. It is, therefore, rightly said by the author that he who tries to prove the existence of God by logical reasoning alone, is a *mushryk* (polytheist) because he is worshipping a god of his own creation and not the real God who cannot be comprehended or conceived by human intellect. God can only be known and understood by God's own definition of Himself as revealed through the prophets and the scriptures.

Allah Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"There is no guide for him who is not guided by God."

How can logical reasoning and rationalism guide one who has been doomed to destruction in the Preserved Tablet *(Lauh-i-Mahfuz)* or the Divine Will and Knowledge. A shaikh has rightly said:

"He who looks up [for proof] to any other than Him, his *ma'rifat* is nothing but perdition."

How can he who offends God gain salvation. So it is God Almighty who guides man to Himself and opens the door of *ma'rifat* to him by whatever way He pleases and to whatever extent He likes, till the seeker realises that his *ma'rifat* is not *ma'rifat,* but it is a veil between him and his God; and at that stage his *ma'rifat* looks to him as mere pretension (*nawaa*). That is why Dhunnun Misri said:

"Beware lest thy *ma'rifat* should turn into pervasion."

A shaikh has said:

"Some people claim to be gnostic, but I claim to be ignorant. This is my gnosis."

Commentary: *Ma'rifat* becomes a veil when the seeker claims perfection and comprehensive knowledge of God. But this is impossible because the finite cannot comprehend or contain the Infinite. That is why the Holy Prophet, peace be upon Him, used to say:

"O Lord, we have not been able to worship Thee as Thou ought to be worshipped. We have not remembered Thee as Thou ought to be remembered. We have not thanked Thee as Thou ought to be thanked. We have not known Thee as Thou ought to be known."

This is because God is unbounded and man is limited.

Therefore, you should lay no claim to *ma'rifat* because this leads to destruction and should try to get attached with reality (*haqiqat*) so that you are saved. He who realises God, realises that his own being and attributes constitute a veil; but he who becomes of God, God becomes his and, therefore, has no need of anything in the universe. The crux of *ma'rifat* is to know that the universe is the Kingdom of God. When a man becomes of God, nothing in the universe veils him from God. His veil is his own ignorance, but

when ignorance is replaced by *ma'rifat* (knowledge), the veil is lifted and this world becomes the next world to him.

Commentary: The Holy Prophet, peace be upon Him, has said:

"He who becomes of Allah, Allah becomes of him."

He has also said:

"He who has Allah, has all."

So when God is his, the whole universe is his. Now the question is how does this world become the next world for him? In order to understand this, the reader must know that the speciality of the next world is that all veils are lifted there and man comes face to face with God, prophets, angels and other spirits. When the seeker goes through the course of purification in this world, all veils are lifted and he comes face to face with all the invisible realities, that is to say Allah Ta'ala Himself, and the angels etc., and there remains no difference between this world and the next for him.

Section

The Sufi shaikhs (*mashaikh*) have explained *ma'rifat* in varying terms which I will now mention for the benefit of the reader. Abdullah bin Mubarak has said:

"*Ma'rifat* is a stage when nothing astonishes you."

This is because astonishment is caused when somebody does a thing which is beyond his capacity to do. But when the seeker reaches the state of *ma'rifat,* he realises that Allah Almighty is Omnipotent and therefore, none of His acts surprise him. If he is surprised at all, he is surprised by the fact that God has enabled man, a handful of dust, and a drop of blood, to obey His commands, and to aspire for Divine Friendship, for Divine Vision and for Divine Nearness and Union. Dhunnun Misri has said:

"*Ma'rifat* is the knowledge of Divine Mysteries accompanied by the rapture and ecstasy of Divine epiphanies, lights and illuminations."

That is to say that God Almighty most graciously appeases His servant's heart with the charms of spiritual radiance and rids him of the afflictions of the world so that the whole universe is of less worth to him than a mustard seed. It is then that the invisible

(*mughaiba*) becomes visible (*mushahidah*) to him; and he is not at all overwhelmed by it. Shaikh Abu Bakr Shibli says:

"*Ma'rifat* is perpetual bewilderment (*hairat*)."

Bewilderment is of two kinds: Bewilderment or doubt about God's existence which is heresy and polytheism, and bewilderment about the nature and attributes of God which is *ma'rifat*. In actual fact the gnostic (*arif*) has no doubt about God's being in his mind at all. But so far as God's nature is concerned, it is impossible for human intellect to fathom it. In other words, he has absolute belief in God's Being and absolute amazement about His nature. It is for this reason that someone has said:

"O Comfort of the bewildered augment my bewilderment."

By the first kind of *ma'rifat,* the pilgrim is convinced of God's Being and of the excellence of His Attributes; and knows that God is the object of all search and research; that He is the Benefactor and Bestower of all favours; that his bewilderment is due to nothing but His nearness. That is why the lover craves for more bewilderment knowing well that it is amazement and not intelligence that brings him nearer to the Lord.

The topic is rather subtle. What I mean is that when the pilgrim realises that God's *ma'rifat* results in amazement and the loss of self-consciousness, and he finds his being (*wujud*) and non-being (*adam*) wholly dependent on God's Being, and his activities and inactivities all operate through His power, he gets bewildered and says to himself, "When the whole universe is in His hands, who am I and what am I?" It is in this sense that the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, has said:

"He who recognises himself has recognised his Lord."

That is to say he who realises that he is non-existent, realises that only God exists.

Commentary: This again is *wahdat-al-wujud* to which the author has repeatedly referred in this book. That is to say the universe exists in God and has no separate being.

When the seeker enters the stage of *fana*, his intelligence and attributes cease to function, and this is bewilderment.

Shaikh Abu Yazid has said:

"*Ma'rifat* is nothing but knowing that all activities and inactivities of mankind are through God."

That is to say none has the power to do anything without His permission. A subject is a subject through Him, an object is an object through Him, attributes are attributes through Him, movements are movements through Him and stationary things are stationary through Him. The human body has no potential to act, and the human mind has no ability to think. Man has no power to act, and all his actions are indirectly the actions of God Almighty.

Commentary: This brings us to the vexing question of predestination and free will which is a very vast subject and requires volumes to elaborate. It would suffice to say that since man's ability to act is the result of the energy of his body and the thinking power of his brain, and since his energy and thinking power is the creation of God, it is correct to say that man's actions are indirectly the actions of God.

And this is exactly the view point held in Islamic scholasticism on predestination which says the truth lies in between predestination and free will.

That is to say, both theories of predestination and free will are correct. For instance, when a King authorises a magistrate to decide the fate of a murderer, it is neither the King alone, nor the magistrate alone who is responsible for the punishment of the accused, but both of them have a hand in it. The fountain of all power is the King and the magistrate is only an agent of the King who exercises the King's powers. Now when the magistrate utilises these powers justly, he is rewarded. If he is unjust, he is punished by the King.

Shaikh Muhammad bin Wasia says:

"An *arif* is he whose speech decreases but amazement increases."

This is because words can explain only what is fathomable. If the theme is unfathomable, words fail to express it. The result is nothing but amazement.

Shaikh Shibli says:

"Real *ma'rifat* of God is the inability to attain *ma'rifat* of God."

This is because when something is beyond man's ability to understand, he has to admit his limitations. But so long as he is in search, he cannot be said to be unable to attain it. The word 'inability' (*ijz*) applies to him only when his faculties of search come to an end; and that state is called *fana* (non-existence).

Commentary: This saying of Shaikh Abu Bakr Shibli is the same as that of *Amirul Mu'minin* Hadhrat Abu Bakr Siddiq, may Allah be pleased with him, who says:

"The inability to know God is really the knowledge of God."

This is tantamount to saying:

"I know this much that I do not know anything."

And also:

"My knowledge of God has reached the stage of ignorance of Him." That is to say when a saint (gnostic) tries his best to understand God, he ultimately reaches a stage when he finds Him unlimited i.e. beyond his capabilities to understand Him. Therefore it is correct to say that real gnosis (*ma'rifat*) is the inability to attain gnosis. This is the stage of *fana*.

There is a class of pretenders, however, who lay claims to *ijz* (inability) while they are far from the stage of *fana* and retain full consciousness of selfhood and exercise all human faculties and powers. Their claims to *ijz* and *fana* are absolutely false and they are definitely misguided. I ask them, "What are you unable to attain?" For, the inability to know has two signs: firstly, *fana,* the loss of the faculties to search, secondly, Divine intoxication (*tajalli*). So far as the loss of faculties is concerned, this happens only when one becomes dumbfounded and speechless.

As regards Divine intoxication, this is a state of complete loss of selfhood in which the power of discrimination is lost, so that one who is unable (*ajiz*) to know, does not even know that he does not know. His only attribute at that stage is inability (*ijz*). This is because the knowledge of his inability is also something 'other than God' (*ghair*). So how can he who is conscious of 'other than God' be an *arif* (gnostic)? As long as the idea of 'other than God' is in his mind, or so long as he is aware 'of other than God', he is not an *arif* (gnostic).

Abu Hafs Haddad says:

"Ever since I recognised God, neither good nor evil entered my heart."

This is because when a man has a carnal desire, it is in his heart which it occurs; or when a noble idea comes to him, it also occurs in his heart. In short, everybody harbours good or bad ambitions in his heart. But since the *arif* (gnostic) has nothing in his heart except God, his heart in free from the idea of good and evil.

Shaikh Abu Bakr Wasiti says:

"He who knows God, is cut-off from everything, nay, he becomes dumb and lost."

The Holy Prophet, peace be upon him has said:

"I am unable to praise Thee...."

When he was in the state of separation (duality), he said:

"I am the most eloquent man in the world."

But when he passed from the state of separation to the state of union, he said:

"My tongue is unable to express the excellence of Thy greatness. What can I say when I am unable to say anything, what can I be when I am not anything. Thou art what Thou art. If I speak, my words will either be mine or Thine. If they are mine, I get separated. If they are Thine, I cannot claim them to be mine in the state of union."

On this Allah Almighty said:

"If you do not speak, I speak."

That is to say if you do not speak and consider yourself incapable of praising Me, I will make all things in the universe proclaim My praise on your behalf.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Lifting of the Second Veil: Regarding *Tauhid* (Oneness or Monotheism)

Allah Ta'ala has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"Your Allah is one." [16:22]

He has again said:

"Do not worship two gods, verily He is one." [16:51]

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w) has said, "There was a person who believed in the oneness of God and did not do anything else as far as prayers and worship were concerned. He told his relatives to burn him to ashes after his death, and then throw one half of the ashes into the sea and another half into the winds so that no trace of him would be left. When he died his will was duly fulfilled. God Almighty bade the winds and the oceans to preserve his ashes so that when he would be raised again on Resurrection, God would ask him why he made that will. He will reply: "O Lord, because I was a great sinner I could not face you due to shame." God Almighty will then forgive him.

Tauhid literally means being one or unifying. Since God is one both in His Essence and Attributes, is indivisible and has no sharer (*sharik*), the unitarians (*muwahdan*) know Him as such, and this knowledge is called *tauhid.*

Tauhid is of three kinds:

1. God's knowledge of His oneness as He is.
2. God's knowledge of His oneness as can be conceived by man.
3. Man's knowledge of God's oneness to the extent that is conceived by man individually.

So that when man is gnostic (*arif*) he believes that God is one in the sense that He is indivisible; that He does not admit duality (*doi*); that He is not numerically one in the sense that by the addition of another He becomes two, so that He is one of the two; that He is not finite (limited) so as to admit six directions as in that case each direction would have needed six directions and thus the number of directions would be unlimited; that He is not in space so as to require any place to be in because in that case that space would also require more space to be in so the fact of being transient (*muhdith*) and eternal (*qadim*) would disappear; that He is no accident (*ardh*) as to require substance (*jauhar*); that He is not a substance which cannot exist without anything like itself; that He is not physical so as to require motion (*harkat*) and rest (*sukoon*); that He is not a spirit so as to need a body; that He is not a body composed of limbs; that He is not immanent in the things of the universe, in which case He becomes homogeneous (*haujins*) with material things; that He is not mixed (*muttahid*) with anything so that He may be called a part of that thing; that He is above all shortcomings (*naqais*), immune from all perils, and free from all imperfections (*ayub*); that He is not like anything to be called one of the two; that He does not beget anybody to necessitate His being begotten; that His Essence and His Attributes suffer no change to cause any change in Himself so that He would be changeable; that He is attributed with those attributes of perfection (*sifat al-kamal*) which the believers and Unitarians (*Muwahhids*) have recognised by virtue of their spiritual insight (*basir*) as well as by His own description in the Scriptures; that He is not attributed with those attributes of imperfection which the heretics attribute to Him, and by which He has not defined Himself; that He is Living (*hayy*), Knowing (*alim*), Merciful (*rauf*), Compassionate (*rahim*), Willing (*murid*), Powerful (*qadir*), Hearing (*sami'*), Seeing (*basir*), Speaking (*kalim*), Eternal (*baqi*); that His knowledge is not produced in Him, nor is His Power induced in Him; that His hearing and seeing is not separable from Him, nor is His speech apart from Him; that He with His attributes is Eternal; that the created things are not outside His knowledge, nor are they independent of His will; that He does what He wills, and wills what He has thought fit so that nobody has the audacity to challenge it; that His decree is final, so that His friends cannot but obey Him; that He is the predestinator (*muqaddir*) of good and evil so that all hope and fear (*ummid-o-bim*) rest with Him; that He is the Creator of profit and loss; that He is the sole Judge, so that His Judgement is nothing but wisdom and there is none to challenge it; that none can see or reach Him except the inhabitants of paradise; that Anthropomorphism does not apply to Him, so that one can be face to face with Him, and that the *auliya-Allah* (Friends of God) can enjoy His vision (*mushahidah*) in this world. Those who believe this are right and those who do not are wrong. There is a lot which

could be said on this subject from the point of view of both doctrinal knowledge and actual experience, but space does not permit us to do so.

I, Uthman bin Ali al-Jallabi, however, wish to mention briefly that, as said before, *tauhid* means unification of something, and this belief cannot be based on anything except knowledge. The *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* have, therefore, affirmed the oneness of the Divine Lord by witnessing His wonderful creations, amazing arts, and countless subtleties in this world which cannot possibly come into existence without a Creator. Since everything in the universe is transitory (*hadith*), there must be a Creator to bring into existence what was non-existent. That is to say this earth, the skies, the sun, the moon, the deserts, seas, mountains together with their motions (*harakat*) and rests (*sakanat*), knowledge and expression, life and death, all these things cannot come into being without one Creator for one universe and not more than one, in which case one Creator would have been dependent on another. The Creator is, therefore, one and only one without any shadow of doubt, who is Perfect, the Living, the Sustainer, the Powerful, the Potent.

He is without partner or partners and is absolutely independent. Thus, we differ from the Dualists (*thanwiyan)* who believe in separate creators for light and darkness, and from the Magians (Fire Worshippers) who believe in two gods: Yazdan and Ahriman; and from the Naturalist (*tahaiyan*) who believe in nature and its potentiality and from the Astronomers (*falkiyan*) who believe in the potentialities of the seven planets; and from the Mu'tazilahs who believe in creators without an end. Those who are desirous of going into the details of this subject, should refer to my book called "*Arriya to-bi-Haquq-Allah*", or to the books of the earlier scholars of Islam since space in this book does not permit detailed discussion.

Section

Junaid is reported to have said, "*Tauhid* is separation of the Eternal (God) from the transient (*muhdith*)." This means that you should not regard the Eternal as transient and the transient as Eternal. God is Eternal and you are transient. The Transient cannot be homogeneous with the Eternal. The Eternal existed before the transient (universe) came into being and is therefore not dependent on the transient now when the transient has come into being. This is contrary to the belief of those who regard men's souls (*arwah*) to be eternal as mentioned before. When someone says that something or somebody is God-incarnate he infringes on the principle that God is Eternal and everything is transient. It is atheism pure and simple to believe in the homogeneity of the Eternal and the transient. May God save us from that heretical belief. The oneness and omnipotence (*qudrat*) and eternity of God (*tauhid*) is apparent in every movement (*harakat*) of the universe. Therefore it is heedlessness in the extreme to aspire for anything except Him, and to be content with other than Him. When He did not need anybody's help to create you, how can He need anybody's help to feed you and sustain you.

Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj says: "Unification (*tauhid*) is annihilation of isolation (*tafrid*)." This is because isolation demands being freed from imperfections (*afat*), while unification implies oneness with something. Isolation presupposes duality, while unification demands non-duality, and therefore none but God can be identified with it. This shows that the word isolation presupposes duality, but *tauhid* (oneness) is the negation of duality. Therefore it is correct to say that the first step in *tauhid* is the annihilation of duality, and the renunciation of anything other than God, for, the concept of other than God is like seeing one's way through a lamp.

Husri says, "Our principles in unification are five: negation of the transient, affirmation of the Eternal, forsaking of homes, separation from relatives and ignoring what is known to us and what is unknown."

Now what is the negation of the transient (*hadith*)? It is parting company with anything opposed to unification. Affirmation of the Eternal means to believe that God is eternal. This has already been explained above in the saying of Junaid. Forsaking homes means opposition to the carnal or baser tendencies (*malufat-i-nafs*) and worldly pleasures. This is for the novices, while the elite have to give up the lust for high states, exalted position and wondrous miracles. Separation from relatives means detachment from the world and attachment with God, because every idea of anything other than God turns out to be a veil, and a calamity in proportion to the degree of attachment. Because it is unanimously agreed that *tauhid* (unification) is concentration of all efforts on God and separation is the opposite of it. And finally, ignoring what is known and unknown means that ordinarily your knowledge of created things is of the nature of how much or how little or how great or how small a thing is, but *tauhid* is above what humans can think of or speculate about God. This is because what is affirmed by ignorance is negated or denied by knowledge, for the reason that ignorance is not *tauhid* and the knowledge of *tauhid* is something above human reach; while both knowledge and ignorance relate to human effort, the former relates to right thinking and the latter to wrong thinking.

A shaikh relates, "Once when I was sitting with Husri who was discoursing on a topic, I fell asleep and saw two angels who descended from heaven and started listening to him. Then one said to the other, 'What this man is saying are words about *tauhid* not *tauhid* itself.' When I woke up I found him speaking on *tauhid*. He turned to me and said, 'O such and such, it is not possible to speak about *tauhid* without words.' "

Junaid says: "*Tauhid* means that you should be like a skeleton in the hands of God over which He passes His orders according to His wishes, and that you should cease to exercise your own powers; that you should get submerged in the ocean of Divine oneness without being concerned about rejection or acceptance of people due to your absorption in God; and that after reaching the state of *fana-fi-Allah* (merger in God) you should cease to exist or exercise any power, and return to your original state of non-being in which you were before creation."

All this means is that the Unitarian (*muwahhid*) should surrender his will to what God wills and obliterate his individuality. This is because he ceases to exist, loses his power of will and comes under the will of God, and God does with him what He pleases, like during the covenant when God Himself was the questioner and the answerer. When you are like that you cannot benefit mankind. So that there is no question of your being invited by people or of your acceptance of their invitations.

This kind of *tauhid* is called *fana-fi-sifat-Illah* (the state of being attributed with the attributes [*sifat*] of God) when the seeker is so humbled by the force of Divine Majesty (*qahr-i-jalal)*, that he becomes a puppet or a subtle body which remains unconscious even when a spear is pierced into his liver. In that event he becomes the treasure house of Divine mysteries to the extent that his word is God's word, his deed is God's deed and his attributes are God's attributes. But he remains subject to the laws of *shariat* as a matter formality and discipline although in reality he is too lost to be subject to anything.

This is what happened to the Prophet (s.a.w.) during the night of Ascension when he reached the highest degree of nearness (*qurb*) where physical distance did not bar spiritual proximity. He was in a state beyond human comprehension and above human imagination, so much so that he had ceased to be conscious of the universe or of himself. His consciousness was lost in Divine Consciousness and his faculties of cognition were changed so that his body became his soul and his soul became secret, and his secret became union. Thus he was in everything without everything and wished to remain in that state forever. But as God's purpose was to make the Prophet (s.a.w.) an example to mankind, He said, "Be as you were." This command of God gave him additional strength. This strength was really God's strength and thus he passed from the state of *fana* (intoxication in God) to the state of *baqa* (abiding by God) and said to his people: "I am not like anyone of you. I pass the night with my Lord who gives me food and drink." He also said: "I enjoy God's nearness to an extent beyond the reach of the highest of the angels and the greatest of the prophets."

Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari has said: "Unification is when God is known to us by knowledge, but He is neither felt or seen by the eyes of this world; that He can be seen by the inner sight of faith without being limited or incarnated (*halul*); that He will be seen in the hereafter by both the physical and the spiritual eyes in His full Majesty and power; that mankind is unable to comprehend His infinity except through His signs; that He is comprehended by our souls and not our brains; and that the true believers will be able to see Him without comprehending His limitless infinity." This is one of the most comprehensive definitions of *tauhid*.

Junaid says: "The best definition of *tauhid* is Abu Bakr's saying that 'Glory be to God who has not shown the path of His *ma'rifat* (gnosis) to men except through their confession of their inability to know Him'."

Some people have misunderstood this statement and think that here, inability to comprehend, means lack of comprehension or ignorance. But this is absurd because inability must relate to a thing which is existing and not to something non-existent. For instance, a man is not incapable of living, it is the dead man who is unable to live. Similarly a man with his eyes intact is not incapable of seeing. It is only the man without eyes who is unable to see. It therefore follows that a man is not incapable of gnosis so long as gnosis exists. This saying of Abu Bakr is akin to the sayings of Abu Sahl Sa'luki and Abu Ali Daqqaq who have said "Gnosis is acquirable (*kasbi*) in the beginning, but is becomes obligatory (*iztarasi*) in the end so that you can neither get it at will nor repulse it at will." According to this saying, *tauhid* becomes an act of God in the heart of man.

Again Shibli says, "*Tauhid* veils the Unitarian from seeing the beauty of His oneness." This is because *tauhid* is the act of man, and the act of man cannot be the means (*illat*) of seeing God, and what cannot be the means of seeing God, is necessarily a veil. Man with all his attributes is something other than God, because if his attributes (*sifat*) are regarded as Divine Attributes then man who is the possessor of these attributes also becomes Divine, and then the Unitarian (*muwahhid*), unity (*tauhid*) and the one (*wahid*) become interdependent. And this is precisely the Christian notion of Trinity. The attribute which veils a man from reaching *tauhid* (oneness) is a veil. And one who is veiled is not a Unitarian (*muwahhid*); for what is other than God in the universe is non-existent.

When it is established that what is other than God is non-existent (*batil*), the seeker himself, so long as he regards himself as other than God, is also *batil* (impossible). And this is what "*la -ilaha-Illa-Allah*" (there is no god but God) means. It is frequently stated in the annals of Sufism that when Ibrahim Khawas went to visit Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj at Kufah, the latter said, "O Ibrahim how have you spent your days of life so far?" His reply was, "I have busied myself in strengthening my trust in God (*tawakkal*)." Hussain said, "You have wasted your life in the purification of your soul. What about your *fana* in Oneness?"

There are many sayings of the Sufi shaikhs on *tauhid* (oneness or unification). Some say *tauhid* is another name of *fana* (annihilation) which means you do not exist, (it is God who exists). While others say that *tauhid* and *fana* are a contradiction in terms like the states of union (*jama'*) and separation (*tafriqa*). I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi maintain that *tauhid* is a secret between God and man which cannot be described in any language much less in ambiguous terms. Moreover, since both the language and the author of the language are other than God, it is polytheism (*shyrk*) to say that anything other than God exists. God knows best.

Commentary: This chapter on *tauhid* is one of the most difficult to understand since it deals with the conception of God, while the Creator cannot possibly be

conceived by the creature. It is, however, worth pointing out that our author has purposely quoted two kinds of sayings on *tauhid* which are mutually contradictory. For instance, Junaid says, "*Tauhid* is separation of the Eternal from the transient." This contradicts what Hussain bin Mansur said, for example, "Unification is the annihilation of separation."

In the former, separation is to be established, while in the latter, separation is to be destroyed. The rest of the sayings uphold Junaid's point of view. This does not mean that one is right and the other is wrong. Both of them are right. Junaid is right because he belongs to the school of thought according to which *baqa* is superior to *fana*, or the state of sobriety is higher than the state of intoxication. Hussain Hallaj is right because he belongs to the Bistamian school according to which *fana* (intoxication or Union with God) is superior to the sobriety of duality (or separation from God). The difference is only of emphasis - one school of thought emphasises *fana*, another prefers *baqa*. The ideal state, however, is the combination of *fana* and *baqa* in which the pilgrim is both united and separated simultaneously, enjoying the pleasure of union with the Divine Beloved and the pangs of separation at one and the same time. This is the highest stage of spiritual perfection and is called *Jamiyyat*. Our author belongs to this school of *Jamiyyat*.

Another important statement which the author has made in this chapter is that the affirmation of the existence of anything other than God is *shyrk* (polytheism). And he is right in saying so both from the logical as well as spiritual point of view. According to the doctrine of *wahdat-al-wujud* (oneness of being), which the author has affirmed in many places in this book, what exists is God, and the things of the universe are included in God's Being like the waves, bubbles, and ice balls in the ocean which are water in reality. If we affirm that the things of the universe have separate existence from God's existence, it is logically and spiritually untenable as we then put a limit on God's limitless Being, and affirm multiplicity of being which amounts to polytheism. It is for this reason that the author has said at the end of this chapter that, "It is polytheism to say that anything other than God exists." Since the topic of *wahdat-al-wujud* has been discussed at length in another chapter, it is not necessary to say anything more about it here. God knows best.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

Lifting of the Third Veil: Regarding *Iman* (Faith)

God has said in the Qur'an:

"O you who believe, believe in the existence of God and the veracity of the Prophet." [3:179]

This has been repeated at many places in the Qur'an. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"Faith (*iman*) is to believe in God, His angels and Books."

Etymologically *iman* means verification. Opinions however differ about what is meant by *iman* in *shariat* (Muslim law). According to the Mu'tazilah[1], *iman* consists of both theory and practice, and, therefore, he who sins goes beyond the pale of Islam. The Khawarijis[2] also are of the same opinion and regard the sinners as heretics (*kafir*). There is another sect which holds that *iman* is just a theoretical proposition, while according to another sect *iman* is the secret knowledge (*ma'rifat*) of God. A section of Sunni scholastics (*mutakallimin*) however, maintain that *iman* is verification (*tasdiq*). I have written a separate book on this subject. What I will say here is what the Sufi shaikhs think of *iman*. There are two schools of thought in this respect like the two schools of the jurists (*fuqaha*).

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1 This sect flourished mostly in Baghdad during the Abbasid King Mamun.

2 The Khawarijis are those who originally supported Hadhrat Ali, but deserted him during the battle of Siffin.

The Sufi shaikhs like Fudhail bin Ayadh, Bishr Hafi, Khair-un-Nassaj, Samnun al-Muhib, Abu Hamzah Bhaghdadi, Abu Muhammad Jariri and others maintain that *iman* consists of a verbal declaration by the tongue, verification by the heart and practice by hands. But a section of Sufi shaikhs like Ibrahim bin Adham, Dhunnun Misri, Abu Yazid Bistami, Abu Sulaiman Darani, Harith Muhasibi, Junaid, Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari, Shaqiq Balkhi, Hatim Asam, and Muhammad bin Fadhl Balkhi hold that *iman* is verbal declaration plus mental verification. There is another section of the jurists (*fuqaha*) like Malik, Shafiyi, Ahmad Hambal and others who agree with the former, while Abu Hanifah, Hasan bin Fadhl Balkhi and the disciples of Abu Hanifah like Muhammad bin Hasan, Daud Tai and Abu Yusuf are in agreement with the latter. But the difference of opinion mentioned above is only that of expression not substance. I will now explain how all these schools of thought mean one and the same thing, and that none is wrong about the reality of *iman*. May Allah help me!

Section

It should be understood that according to the code of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* and the consensus of Sufi shaikhs versed in gnosis, *iman* (faith) consists of two parts: *asl* (root) and *fara* (branches). *Asl* is the name of inner conviction (with the heart) and *fara* means outer action based on the inner conviction. Now according to Arab usage *fara* is sometimes given the name of *asl*. For instance, we know that the sun is *asl* and its light is *fara*, but etymologically light is also called sun. In the same manner our action of obedience to Divine Commands is called *iman*, although in reality it falls in the category of *fara* (deeds). Therefore, mere belief or inner conviction is not enough for immunity from punishment. It has to be verified by outer deeds.

Now since immunity from punishment is commensurate with pious deeds or obedience to God, the pious deeds (*itaat*) have been given the name of *iman* proper. Another section of the Muslims, however, insist that it is gnosis (*ma'rifat*) not obedience which ensures immunity. Obedience without *ma'rifat* is of no avail. But in *ma'rifat* without obedience there is a possibility of security from punishment either by God's grace (*fadhl*) or by the intercession (*shafa'at*) of the Prophet (s.a.w.), or the punishment may be in proportion to his sins and the sinner may be released from Hell after he has been punished. Therefore, those who have *ma'rifat* will not remain permanently in Hell even if they are sinners. But those who do pious deeds without reaching the state of *ma'rifat*, will never go to Paradise. This shows that mere obedience does not guarantee security (*najat*). The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"None of you can be saved by good deeds."

When he was asked, "Not even you?" He replied, "Yes, not even me, unless God's bounty (*Rahmat*) comes to my help."

Therefore, according to the consensus of Muslim divines, *iman* is really *ma'rifat,* (gnosis) of course, with inner belief (*tasdiq-bil-qalb*) and outer action (*aml*).

Now what is *ma'rifat*? It is knowing God by virtue of His Attributes. Broadly speaking Divine Attributes are of three kinds: Attributes of Beauty (*Jamal*), attributes of Majesty (*Jalal*) and Attributes of Perfection (*Kamal*). So far as the attributes of Perfection are concerned, it is not possible for man to know them except that we generally attribute perfection to Him and exonerate Him from imperfection. As for the attributes of Beauty *(Jamal)* and Majesty *(Jalal)* the seeker whose *ma'rifat* (gnosis) is characterized by *Jamal*, is always the lover of beauty; while he whose *ma'rifat* is based on *Jalal*, is always awestricken and hates his human attributes. Now both the love for beauty and the hatred of human attributes spring from the love of God. This is because knowledge of one's human attributes is not possible without love. It also means that *iman* (faith) and *ma'rifat* are nothing but love. What we call obedience (*ta'at*) is actually the outward expression of love, because the acts of worship are as much functions of the body as vision is the function of the soul (*qalb*), observation of the eye and repentance of the heart. In case the body abstains from obedience, the heart cannot, as it is the seat of love.

But there is a section of heretics in this age, who maintain that worship (*ta'at*) is necessary so long as *ma'rifat* is not attained; and that when *ma'rifat* is attained worship becomes redundant. They are led to this erroneous belief by seeing some novices in Sufism whose life pattern is very attractive but they are unable to attend to the rituals of Islam due to an overdose of spiritual intoxication. But this is their weakness. It is wrong to say that when you reach God, worship is no longer necessary. I say, on the contrary, when you recognise God your love and obedience should get redoubled. I admit a stage comes when the pilgrim is relieved of the hardship of worship. But it does not mean that he ceases to worship. What happens is that he no longer finds it difficult to worship, for, while worship is a hard duty for others, it becomes a source of pleasure for him. But this stage is not possible without an intensity of love and extreme devotion.

There is, yet another section of Muslims who maintain that *iman* (faith) is a gift of God, while there are some who think it is due to man's own effort. This difference of opinion is prevalent mostly in Transoxania. Those who regard *iman* as God's gift are called Jabriyah[1], while those who attribute it to man's effort are termed Qadariyah[2].

The fact is that it is not possible for man to recognise God without His guidance. The Truth lies between predestination and free will. It can, therefore, be rightly said that

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1 Those who believe in the theory of predestination.

2 Those who believe in freewill.

iman is the result of man's effort with the help of God. For, nobody can guide a person who is misled by God, and nobody can mislead a person who is guided by God. God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"Whomsoever God wishes to guide, He opens his breast to accept Islam. And whomsoever He wishes to lead astray, He makes his breast hard and narrow." [6:125]

According to this principle the inclination to believe is the act of God, while belief itself is the act of man [3]. The signs of belief in God are: for the heart (*qalb*) to believe in *tauhid* (monotheism), for the eyes to abstain from looking at forbidden things, for the ears to refrain from hearing forbidden words, for the tongue to abstain from telling lies, for the stomach to abstain from forbidden food, and for the whole body to abstain from sins so that perfect unanimity is established between words and deeds.

Therefore those who think that faith comes from God, maintain that *iman* can increase and decrease. But this is wrong, because if belief is liable to increase and decrease, the one who is believed (God) must also be subject to increase and decrease. But the fact is that increase and decrease is possible only in the *fara* (branch i.e. deeds) and not in *asl* (root or principle or actual belief in God). This is not acceptable to the Anthropomorphists (*Hashwiyah*) who try to copy the two groups, one of whom maintains that worship is faith and the other thinks that faith is no more than lip-service. But the truth is that both of them are wrong. For, faith (*iman*) is complete absorption of all the attributes in search of God.

It is unanimously believed by the gnostics (*arifin*) that when the storm of *ma'rifat* (gnosis) overwhelms the seeker, the veils of agnosticism are torn and reduced to dust. It is rightly said:

"When the day dawns, the lamp is of no use."

It is futile to prove the existence of the sun by arguments. The proof of the sun is the sun itself.

God Almighty has said in the Qur'an:

"When the Kings enter a town, they ruin it." [27:34]

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[3] When somebody asked Imam Ja'far as-Sadiq, "What is correct, *jabr* or *qadr*?" His reply was: "The truth is in between the two." (*Al-amro bain al-amrain.*) Imam Hasan ibn Ali also gave the same answer when asked by Khawaja Hasan of Basrah as to what was the correct belief.

When the sun of *ma'rifat* rises in the heart (*qalb*) of the believer, agnosticism is banished. In that event the seeker's attributes are overpowered by Divine Attributes, and what he sees, says or does is through Divine Attributes.

Commentary: Rumi has rightly said: "When Abdullah (Allah's slave) speaks, it is Allah who speaks, although it is through the tongue of Abdullah."

It is related that when somebody asked Ibrahim Khawas to define *iman*, he said "I cannot give an extempore answer to your question, since whatever I will say in haste will not be the truth. I am presently going to Makkah. You come with me so that I am able to reply your question intuitively." The man said, "I went with him; and as we went through the deserts, we got two loaves of bread and two cups of water daily. He gave me one and took the other for himself. One day an old man on horseback came along, dismounted and conversed with the shaikh for a while. After he left, I asked Ibrahim who the rider was and what he said. He replied, 'This is the answer to your question.' I said 'How?' He said, 'It was Khidhr who wanted to be my companion, but I refused, since I feared lest his company should impair my *tawakkal* (trust) in God.' " Real faith (*Haqiqat-i-Iman*) is trust in God.

Says Allah in the Qur'an:

"Have full trust in Allah if you are true believers." [3:160]

Shaikh Muhammad bin Khafif has said:

"*Iman* is the name of conviction from which all knowledge of the unseen springs."

This is because God cannot be seen with physical eyes. He can be seen through spiritual sight when it is gifted by God. It is through God's grace and not by effort that *arifin* (gnostics) are favoured with *ma'rifat* and the *ulama* are favoured with knowledge. In brief, the true believer (*mu'min*) is he who is an *arif* (gnostic). He is also called *wasil-bil-haq* (united with God).

Since quite a lot has been said on this subject elsewhere in this book, the topic is closed to make the book as brief as possible. I will now explain the secrets (*asrar*) or implications of deeds (*mu'amilat*) which are the outward expression of *iman*.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

Lifting of the Fourth Veil: Regarding *Taharat* (Purification)

Next to *iman*, the first obligation (*faridha*) is purification (*taharat-e-badan*) prior to *salat* (ritual prayers). Purification consists of cleaning the body of dirt, taking a bath after sex, washing the three parts of the body i.e. hands, face and feet, and wiping the head with wet hands as prescribed by *shariat* (Islamic law); or else making token ablution (*tayammum*) in the event of the non-availability of water or illness. This is well known to everybody.

Kinds of Purification

Purification is of two kinds: Physical purification and spiritual purification. Spiritual purification is as necessary for *ma'rifat* as physical purification is for prayers (*salat*). As water must be pure for ablution so too must *tauhid* (belief in one God) be pure and unadulterated by agnosticism. That is why the saints of Islam (*auliya-Allah*) were always busy ensuring spiritual purification along with constant physical purification. The Prophet (s.a.w.) told one of the Companions to be with *wudhu* (ablution) all the time so as to be protected by angels. Allah has said in the Qur'an:

"Allah loves those who repent and those who become purified." [2:222]

And the Prophet (s.a.w.) would always say in his invocations:

"O Allah purify my heart from hypocrisy."

Although not even the shadow of hypocrisy ever crossed his mind. The fact is that even the consciousness of miraculous powers vouchsafed to him were regarded by him as affirmation of other than God, since in *tauhid* affirmation of other than God is also regarded as hypocrisy.

However much the Sufi shaikhs were eloquent on the merits of miracles, ultimately such things prove to be the greatest impediment in the way of spiritual perfection. That is why Abu Yazid said:

"The hypocrisy of the shaikhs is better than the sincerity of the *murids*."

This means that what is elevation for the novices is degradation for the adepts. The novice is satisfied with miracles, but the adept aims at the Bestower of miracles. In short, attainment of miracles is regarded by the *arifin* (gnostics) as hypocrisy because it is involvement with other than God. Therefore, the Friends of God wish that the sinners get rid of their sins and the sinners desire that the *kafirs* (heretics) get rid of their *kufr* (heresy). If heretics come to know that God hates heresy, and if sinners come to know that God dislikes sins, both the heretics and the sinners would be emancipated. It shows that both physical and spiritual purification must go together.

For instance, when you wash your hands, you should imagine that you are washing your heart of the filth of worldliness. When you clean your mouth, imagine that you are purifying your mouth from the *dhikr* (remembrance) of other than God. When you wash your face think that you are turning away from the love of all your ambitions, and returning to God. When you wipe your head think that you are submitting everything to God's care. When you wash your feet, you should resolve that you should not aspire for anything except God. In short you should aim at both physical and spiritual purification in everything you do. In Islam external deeds have a great bearing on internal purification, like the verbal confession which is dependent on verification by the heart (*tasdiq-al-qalb*), and external form of worship which has to be accompanied by inner sincerity. So the method of inner purification is to understand the evils of this world and to guard against its glamorous deceptions in order that it does not get rooted in your heart. But that is possible only through intense struggle against the lower self; and the most effective struggle is to obey the laws of *shariat* under all circumstances and at all costs. Ibrahim Khawas has said:

"I pray to Allah to allow me eternal life in this world to remember Him by observing all the rules of *shariat* when the people are steeped in the world and have forgotten Him."

It is said that Shaikh Abu Bakr Tahir Harami never relieved himself within the boundary of the Holy Shrine of Makkah during his stay there for forty long years. Every time he had to answer the call of nature he would go out of the sacred area saying that he did not like to pour the water of his ablutions on the ground which the Almighty had called His. It is related of Ibrahim Khawas that when he was staying in a mosque in

Ray he was suffering from stomach trouble and took sixty baths in a single night and eventually died in water. Abu Ali Rodbari was once troubled by evil thoughts. He went to the river and stayed there for the night. When the day dawned he invoked God's mercy to restore him to spiritual health. He heard a voice from the riverside saying: "Spiritual health lies in knowledge."

It is said that when Sufyan Thauri was suffering from stomach trouble, he performed ablutions sixty times for a single prayer (*salat*) before death, saying, "I should be clean when I leave this world."

It is said that once Shibli performed ablution (*wudhu*) and wanted to enter the mosque when he heard a voice saying, "Thou hast purified thyself outwardly, where is thy inner purification?" He went back and gave everything he possessed in charity, keeping for himself only the clothes he was wearing. When he went to see Master Junaid, he was told, "O Abu Bakr what a marvellous purification you have performed! May Allah keep you always purified."

Consequently, he remained in the state of purity (*wudhu*) for life. When he was about to die he asked one of his *murids* to help him perform *wudhu*. In doing so the murid forgot to wet his beard whereupon Shibli made a sign towards the beard and it was duly wetted. He used to say, "Whenever I forgot any etiquette of *wudhu* (ablution) prescribed by *shariat*, I received a Divine Warning to do it again."

Once after doing *wudhu* he wanted to enter the mosque when a voice said, "O Abu Bakr do you think you are clean enough to enter My house?" Hearing this he stepped back, whereupon the voice said, "Do you have the impertinence of turning away from Our audience? Where can you go?" On this he uttered a loud cry (*naara*). The voice said, "Do you swear at Us?" He stood silent. The voice said, "Are you showing off your patience?" At this he exclaimed, "O my Lord, I seek Thy protection against Thyself." His words are:

"Al mustaghatho minka ilaika."

Abu Yazid has said, "When the thought of this world crosses my mind I perform *wudhu* (ablution). But at the thought of the next world, I take a bath. This is because this world is transitory and the hereafter is eternal."

There are numerous sayings of the Sufi shaikhs on the subject of purification by which they have impressed repeatedly the necessity for inner and outward purification to be able to gain God's nearness. Outer purification is attained through water, while inner purification is gained through *wara'* (repentance) and love of God. Now I will explain repentance and its implications.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

Repentance and its Implications

What is Repentance (*Taubah*)?

It must be remembered that repentance is the first step towards Divine nearness just as purification (*taharat*) is the first step towards God's worship. Allah has said:

"O believers, repent unto Allah with a sincere repentance." [66:8]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"There is nothing that Allah loves more than repentance during youth."

He has also said:

"He who repents is like one who has no sin."

Then he recited the following *ayat* of the Qur'an,

"Sin does not harm one whom Allah loves."

This means that he will not become a heretic by committing sins, and his faith (*iman*) will not suffer. Literally the word *taubah* means "return". So here *taubah* means coming back from sin to righteousness. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"Repentance is remorse (*nadamat*)."

And this saying includes all the three ingredients of *taubah*, namely, remorse over disobedience, the will to give up sin, and determination to do good.

Remorse is caused by three things just as repentance has three conditions.

These are:

i) fear of punishment and consequent sorrow;
ii) temptation of Divine reward which cannot be gained by sin;
iii) shame resulting from disobedience.

In the first case the penitent is called '*taib*'; in the second case he is called '*munib*' and in the third case he is called '*awwab*'. In this way repentance will have three stages:

i) Repentance which is on account of the fear of punishment;
ii) *Inabat* which is caused by the desire for reward;
iii) *Awwabat* which means the will to obey God.

Similarly *taubah* is the status of common Muslims, who are addressed in the following *ayat*:

"O believers repent unto Allah with sincere repentance." [66:8]

It implies repentance from major sins (*kabair*). *Inabat* is status of the saints and Friends of God as said in the *ayat*:

"He who fears *Rahman* without seeing and comes with an eager heart." [50:33]

Awwabat is the status of the Prophets in accordance with the *ayat*:

"The best slave is *awwab* (lover)." [38:44]

In other words *taubah* means giving up major sins for the sake of worship; *inabat* is returning from minor sins to love; and *awwabat* is the return from self to God. But there is a difference between these three states, i.e. returning from major sins to worship, returning from minor sins to love and returning from self to God. Real *taubah* lies in giving up heedlessness and being careful on account of fear of Divine punishment. When the sinner becomes conscious of his wretchedness, and intends to ameliorate it, God makes it easy for him to repent, and pulls him out of the quagmire of sin to the sweetness of *iman* (*halawat*). According to *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* and all the Sufi shaikhs, a man who repents one sin but continues to commit others, is entitled to be rewarded for giving up that sin. Since it is possible that through the blessings of his *taubah* he may give up other sins. For instance, if a man who is involved in drinking as well as fornication gives up fornication and continues to drink, his *taubah* regarding fornication can be

considered valid, although he continues to drink. But a sect of the Mu'tazilah called Kahshaniyah maintains that repentance is not valid unless it is total repentance of all sins, which is not correct, since man is punished only for the sin he commits and is rewarded for doing good deeds. Similarly if he does some good deeds and neglects others, he is entitled to be rewarded for those deeds and to be punished for neglecting others. However, if a person who lacks the susceptibility to commit sin repents, his repentance would also be valid. This is because, *taubah* generates *nadamat* (shame) which is a definite virtue. It is through *nadamat* that he resolves to avoid sins irrespective of whether he has the inclination to do so or not.

It is also worth mentioning that the Sufi shaikhs differ on the definition and validity of *taubah*. For instance, Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari and others maintain that:

"*Taubah* is real only when you do not forget the sins you committed."

That is to say you should always be sorry for those sins no matter how many good deeds you have on your balance sheet. He who remembers his past sins is never proud of his good deeds.

Junaid and others, on the other hand, believe that *taubah* is genuine only when you forget your past sins, because the penitent is a lover of God and is one with Him. How can he remember his sin? This controversy has its origin in the debate over *mujahidah* (austerity) and *mushahidah* (union), mentioned in the doctrine of the Sahlis. Those who regard the penitent as self-conscious, attribute his forgetfulness of sins to heedlessness or negligence. But those who think the penitent is God-conscious regard his remembrance of sin as polytheism (*shyrk*). In short, if he is self-conscious he is still far from knowing Divine mysteries. If he is God-conscious, he cannot think of other than God. Prophet Moses (Musa a.s.) said: "I beg your pardon," [7:143], when he was self-conscious. Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) said: "I am unable to praise Thee" when he was God-conscious. In fact it is a sin to remember sin during union with God. The real penitent is, therefore, he who forgets himself. How can he remember his sins when he has lost himself (in God). To remember sin is also sin, because both, committing sin and remembering sin are tantamount to turning away (*i'radh*) from God. Says Junaid,

"I have read many books but found nothing more educative than the following verse:

Idha qulto ma adhnabto qalat mujibatun,
Hayatuka dhanbun la yuqaso biki dhanbun."

Meaning:

When I said to the Beloved what is my sin,
He said your very life is such a sin that no greater sin is conceivable.

When the lover's very existence in the presence of the Beloved is a sin, how can his attributes be otherwise.

Briefly speaking, to repent is Divine, while to sin is human. When *nadamat* (shame) overtakes man nothing can stop it. When it cannot be stopped in the beginning how can it be stopped in the end. Allah Almighty has, therefore said:

"He (Adam) repented unto the Lord since He is the greatest Forgiver and most Merciful." [2:37]

The Qur'an abounds with verses to this effect. These are too well-known to be reproduced here.

Taubah is of three kinds:

1) The determination to give up wrong for the sake of right.
2) To give up right for the sake of greater right.
3) To give up selfhood for God (union with God).

The first kind of *taubah* is referred to in the following *ayat* of the Qur'an:

"Those who commit sin or do harm to themselves, and then turn to Allah, are forgiven by Him." [7:153]

The second kind of *taubah* is mentioned in the *ayat* in which Prophet Moses said:

"I beg your pardon," (He was sorry to have desired the vision of God) [7:143].

The third kind of *taubah* is Prophet Muhammad's (s.a.w.) prayer given in his following saying:

"When my *qalb* (heart) is overwhelmed (by Divine nearness) I beg Allah's forgiveness seventy time daily."

Commentary: Shaikh Abul Qasim Qushairi has explained this Hadith as follows, "When I feel I would be burnt to ashes as a result of the flames of Divine epiphanies and effulgence, I beg Allah to draw seventy veils between me and Himself." The Shaikh says that the word *ghafara* etymologically means veil or curtain.

The *taubah* of the first category is that of ordinary men who try to give up sin to do good deeds. The *taubah* of the elect is to move from a good to a better position. The *taubah* of Prophet Moses was of this kind, because to stay at one station without trying to go higher is also a veil (*hijab*).

But the first kind of *taubah* is not possible for the Friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) because they do not commit sins. When they resort to *taubah* it is of the second category like Hadhrat Musa (a.s.) who repented because he had asked for Divine Vision (*ruyat*). While the whole world is fond of Divine Vision, he (Musa) repented because he asked for it on his own choice. But in love there is no choice, it is submission to the Beloved's will. Some people think he renounced the Vision of God. But actually what he renounced was his own will, because the will is also a veil in the spiritual relationship with God.

Commentary: The story as stated in the Qur'an is that when Hadhrat Musa (a.s.) said, "*Rabbi arini unzur ilaik*," meaning, "O Lord, let me have a look at Thee." The answer was: "You cannot see Me (*Lantarani*). But look at My light on the mountain. Let us see if you can bear it." But he could not bear it and went into a swoon. On coming to himself he asked for God's forgiveness saying: "*Tubto ilaik*," (I beg your pardon,) [7:143]. This act of repentance on Hadhrat Musa's part was of the second category because it constituted renunciation of a good thing for a better one.

The third category of *taubah* i.e. renunciation of selfhood for God is the lot of the lovers who are never satisfied with any stage of Divine nearness and try to go higher and higher, like Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) who said:

"When I reach a higher stage I feel sorry for having been at a lower stage earlier and I ask for Allah's forgiveness seventy times daily." God knows best.

Section

Know that it is not necessary for the acceptance of *taubah* that the penitent should not commit any sin in his life. If he commits a sin even after *taubah*, he does get the blessings of his first *taubah*. There have been many spiritual pilgrims who repented and reverted to sin many times. A shaikh has said he repented seventy times and reverted to sin seventy times. But when he repented for the seventy first time he never went back to sin.

Shaikh Umar bin Najid says, "I repented at the hands of Shaikh Abu Uthman Hiri but I reverted to sin after some time and went away. Whenever I saw him anywhere I would hide myself from his sight. Once when I happened to stand face to face with him, he said, 'My dear son, look at your enemies. They laugh at you when they find you involved in sin. If you cannot abstain from it come and stay with me, so that you can get rid of it.' This speech on his part proved to be a remedy for me and I never committed sins thereafter."

It is related that once a man repented, but reverted to sin after some time. One day he felt grieved over his condition and said to himself, "O Lord, how can I return to you." A voice said, "We were happy when you worshipped us. When you neglected us, we kept waiting. Now that you intend to come back we accept you."

We will now mention some of the sayings of the Sufi Shaikhs on the subject.

Section

Dhunnun Misri says:

"The common people repent of their sins, while the elite repent of their heedlessness (negligence), because the former will be asked to account for their sins, while the elite will be questioned about their spiritual states. This is because while the commoners are pleased with sin, the latter are veiled by them."

Abu Hafs Haddad says:

"Man has no part to play in *taubah*, because it is from God to him and not from him to God."

This means that repentance cannot be acquired (*kasbi*); it is Divine gift (*wahbi*). This is what Junaid also believes.

Abul Hasan Bushanji says:

"*Taubah* is real only when you feel no pleasure in remembering your sins."

This is because in remembering sin you feel either sorry or proud. If you feel sorry, this is real *taubah*. If you are proud of it you are a sinner. Sinning is not so harmful as feeling proud about it, because sin can be committed in a moment while the evils of pride last for long.

Dhunnun Misri says:

"*Taubah* is of two kinds: of Fear (*inabat*) and of Shame. The former is caused by fear of God's punishment, while the latter by feeling ashamed of God's bounties. The first is the result of his Attribute of Majesty (*Jalal*), and the second is caused by His Attribute of His Beauty (*Jamal*). One gets burnt by the fire of His Majesty (*Jalal*) and the other gets illuminated by the light of His Beauty (*Jamal*). The former is blessed by sobriety (*sahw*) and the latter by intoxication (*sukr*).

Commentary: It is one of the peculiarities of this book that the author always begins with the initial stages of a common man and ends up with the elect (*khawas*), and their high spiritual states and stations, so that both the commoners and the elite benefit. Here by "intoxicated" he means those who are at the stage of *fana-fi-Allah*, (self-effacement), and by "sobriety" are those who are in the state of *baqa-bi-Allah* (subsistence by God). Enough has been said in this book about *fana* and *baqa*.

CHAPTER TWENTY

Lifting of the Fifth Veil: Regarding *Salat* (Prayer)

Allah has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"Continue saying *salat* and paying *zakat*." [2:43]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"Take care of *salat* and of the slaves in your possession." [1]

Etymologically the word "*salat*" means remembrance or obedience. But in the terminology of jurisprudence (*fiqh*) it means the ritual prayer five times a day. But *salat* is preceded by purification (*taharat*) which is of ten kinds:

1) Outer purification from filth, and inner purification from sensual desires (lust).

2) Purification of the attire: outer purification from dirt, and inner purification from unlawful means.

3) Purification of the place of worship: Outward purification from filth and inner purification from heresy and agnosticism.

[1] This means that looking after slaves is as obligatory in Islam as are the daily prayers (*salat*).

4) Purification of facing correct direction of Ka'bah: outward turning to the building and inward to God.

5) Standing: Outwardly with physical strength, and inwardly by God's power, resulting in Divine proximity.

6) Sincerity of purpose aiming for God's pleasure.

7) Saying "*Allahu-Akbar*" (God is the Greatest) in the state of awe and humility, aiming at Divine nearness.

8) Recitation of the Qur'an with correct pronunciation and reverence.

9) Bowing respectfully and placing the forehead on the ground (*sajda*) in extreme humility.

10) Sitting with folded knees (*tahayyat*) to acknowledge God's gift of self annihilation (*fana*) followed by *baqa* (subsistence by God).

It is related that when the Prophet (s.a.w.) went in *salat* a sound like the boiling of a huge kettle could be heard from his chest. And when Ali stood up for *salat*, he would tremble saying that it was the time to fulfil the trust (*amanat*) which the heavens and earth could not bear.

Comments: This refers to the Divine declaration in the Qur'an saying that when the Trust was presented to the heavens and earth they expressed their inability to bear it, but Man accepted it because he was "*Zaluman Jahula*" [33:73]. Now these words "*Zaluman Jahula*" have been interpreted by the externalists (exoteric scholars) to mean "cruel and dark". But the esoterics (saints) maintain that the words "*Zaluman Jahula*" refer to man's nature of being a combination of the body (dark) and the soul (bright).

The verse would, therefore, mean that the heavens (i.e. inhabitants of heavens, angels) could not work as God's mirror to reflect His Attributes of perfection as they were pure light, and the earth was unable to reflect His Attributes because it was purely dark (material). But Man was in a position to become a mirror to reflect Divine Attributes as he was the combination of light (soul) and darkness (body) necessary for a mirror to reflect or accept Divine Attributes of Beauty (*Jamal*), Majesty (*Jalal*) and Perfection (*Kamal*), and was thus delegated Divine powers to function as Vicegerent of God on earth.

Now, because, it is not possible for man to work as God's Vicegerent in the state of *fana* (intoxication) he has to descend to the state of *baqa* (sobriety) or to his individuality or consciousness, to exercise the Divine powers delegated to him in the state of *fana* (perfect absorption in God), and to discharge his duties as the Viceroy of God on earth.

Now what is *salat*? It is the full expression of human capability or readiness to obey Divine Commands and discharge his duties to the Creator and creation, being equipped with Divine powers in the state of *fana*. Hadhrat Ali's anxiety at the time of *salat* is therefore, understandable. It was his anxiety to be equal to the Trust reposed in man as Vicegerent of God on earth.

When Hatim Asam was asked by a Shaikh as to how he performed *salat*, he said: "When the time for *salat* comes, I make two ablutions (*wudhu*), outward ablution with water and inward with *taubah* (repentance). When I go to the mosque, I feel I am standing in the Ka'bah in Makkah with *maqam-e-Ibrahim* in front, paradise on my right, Hell on my left, the Bridge *Sirat* under my feet, and the angel of death behind me. After that I say *Allah-u-Akbar* (God is the Greatest) with full reverence, and stand with respect, recite the Qur'an with awe (*haibat*), bow down with humility, do *sajda* (prostration) with submission, sit down with grace and gratitude and wish *salaam* (welfare) to the whole world (by turning my face to the right and left)."

Section

Know that *salat* is the kind of worship by which spiritual pilgrims reach various states and stations from the beginning to the end of the journey.

Commentary: This shows that *salat* is compulsory right up to the end of the spiritual journey, contrary to the erroneous notion of novices that it is no longer necessary once you have reached God.

Salat is the process through which the entire spiritual journey is demonstrated. For instance, *taubah* takes the place of physical purification (*wudhu*); guidance of the Shaikh takes the place of turning to Ka'bah; austerity (*mujahidah*) takes the place of standing erect in *salat*; perpetual *dhikr* (remembrance) takes the place of recitation of the Qur'an; humility takes the place of the bowings (*ruku'*); self-knowledge takes the place of *sujud* (prostration); peace of mind takes the place of *tashahud* (sitting in *tahhayyat*); detachment from the world (*tafrid*) takes the place of *salaam* (the end of *salat*).

That is the reason why the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in the physical state of non-dependence on food and drink, would call upon Bilal, "Comfort me by the call to prayer (*adhan*)."

The opinion of the Sufi shaikhs is divided on this topic; all viewpoints being equally weighty. Some of them maintain that *salat* is the means of obtaining God's presence (*hadhur*), while others are of the view that it causes "absence" (*ghayub*). That is to say, those who are normally absent from God, obtain His presence through *salat*, and those who are normally present with God, become absent from Him through *salat*, like in the next world where those who see God, are absent (from themselves), and those who do not see God are present (to themselves).

I, Ali bin Uthman Jallabi, believe that *salat* is a Divine Command which neither causes presence nor absence, because a command is not the means (*alat*) of anything. The cause of presence is presence itself and of absence is absence itself. God's Command has nothing to do with presence or absence. If *salat* were the cause of presence, nothing else would have brought him to God's presence. If it were the cause of absence, the absconder would necessarily be in *salat* (which is absurd). Therefore, when *salat* is not a deterrent or stimulus with regard to presence or absence, it is, of necessity, a great force having nothing to do with presence or absence.

Commentary: The states of presence and absence are extremely subtle. According to the Sufi shaikhs, those who are in the state of *fana* or union with God, are present with God and absent from themselves; while those who are separated from God in the state of *baqa* are considered to be present with themselves. This has been discussed at length separately in this book.

There are three categories of spiritual travellers:

i) Those who are beginners are called *Mubtadi*
ii) Those who are in the middle of the journey are called *Mutawassit*
iii) Those who have completed the course are called *Muntahi*

The greatest stress is laid on *salat* by those who belong to the first category called *Mubtadis* (the beginners or novices) who are engaged in a severe struggle *(mujahidah)* against the lower beastly self, and by those who have reached perfection who are called *Ashab-i-Istaqamat*. (They are at the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah* — Subsistence by God and are also called *Ashab-i-Tamkin.*) The former are told by their shaikhs to indulge in *salat* excessively to the extent of four-hundred bowings (*raka'ats*) daily; while the latter resort to salat as a matter of thanksgiving for being accepted in Divine Audience.

So far as the people of the second category are concerned, that is those who are in the middle journey, called *Ashab-i-Ahwal* (or *Ashab-i-Talwin*), they consist of two categories:

Those who say *salat* in the state of intense God-intoxication, and those who can come out of intoxication to the state of sobriety and are able to say salat in the state of self-consciousness (*tafarqa*). The former resort to supererogatory prayers (*nawafil*) besides the obligatory (*fardh*) and semi-obligatory *sunnahs*, while the latter are contented with *fardh* and *sunnah* (obligatory and semi-obligatory).

The Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "*Salat* is the delight of my heart." This is because the seekers at the advanced or final stages of the spiritual journey enjoy prayers. Similarly, when the Prophet (s.a.w.) was brought to the state of extreme nearness of God on the Night of Ascension and his soul was freed from the fetters of earthly life, he was elevated to such high status that his *nafs* (body) turned into soul, the soul turned into *sirr* (mystery), and the *sirr* was drowned in the glory of the Divine Being. In that state of sublime exaltation he lost consciousness of all states and stations and was prompted by Divine Will to exclaim:

"O my Lord! Please send me not back to the dungeon of miseries, and the prison of flesh and blood."

The Divine Command was:

"Our order is, go back to the world to establish Our law in Our land. We will bestow upon thee there what We have bestowed here."

When he returned to the earth and felt like going back to the realm of the eternal bliss, he would say, "O Bilal, appease my soul with the *adhan* (call) for *salat*." In this way every *salat* became an Ascension, a fresh state of proximity for him. So that when his body was in *salat*, his soul was in the embrace of God. That was why he said that *salat* was the light of his eyes (*qurratul 'ain*). In that state while his body was in the physical world, his soul was in the Realm of Divinity, while his body was human, his soul was angelic.

Sahl bin Abdullah of Tustar has said:

"The sign of sainthood is when God appoints an angel who urges him to say *salat* and wakes him up when he is sleeping at the time of *salat*."

This was exactly the case with Sahl himself. Although he was very old and could hardly move, when the time of *salat* came, he would perform it promptly and could not move an inch after it was over.

One of the Sufi shaikhs has said:

" He who prays (*musalli*) needs four things: Annihilation of the lower self (*fana-i-nafs*),

Curbing of lust (*zahab-i-tabaa*), Purification of the soul (*sufa-assirr*), and Perfection of Union (*kamal-al-mushahidah*)."

But he cannot do so without annihilation of the lower self. And this is not possible without supreme concentration on union. As soon as union is reached, the force of *nafs* (lower self) comes to an end. It is the lower self which acts as a veil which results in separation (*tafarqa*), and bars union.

As regards to the second requirement called Curbing of Lust, it is not possible without the affirmation of Divine Majesty (*Jalal*), because Divine Majesty destroys what is other than God. The third requirement i.e. Purification of the soul, is attained by love; and the fourth requirement, namely Perfect Union, cannot be attained except through absolute inner purity.

It is said that Hussain bin Mansur (Hallaj) used to pray four hundred bowings (*raka'ats*) daily. When asked as to why he took so much trouble, despite having attained such a high position, he said "Pain and pleasure are what they are from your point of view. When one reaches the stage of self annihilation (*fana*), pain and pleasure cease to exist. Beware lest you regard heedlessness as perfection and lust as love of God."

It is said that once Dhunnun Misri stood up for prayers; when he said "*Allahu Akbar*" he was overpowered by ecstasy and fell down.

Shaikh Junaid continued to recite till old age, the supererogatory *aurad* which he had started in the prime of his youth. When it was suggested to him to give them up in old age, he remarked, "How can I leave at the end what benefited me immensely in the beginning of the spiritual journey?"

We know that the angels are perpetually engaged in worship, because they are spiritual beings and have no lower self (*nafs*) which deters mankind from obeying God. The lower self is, therefore, weakened and purified by self negation and austerity till it is subdued. And when it is subdued, worship becomes your food and drink.

Abdullah bin Mubarak says, "During my youth, there was a woman who was stung by a scorpion forty times while she was saying *salat*, but she did not move a bit. When she had finished I said, 'Mother, why did you not throw it away?' She said, 'You are still too young to understand why I did not do that; when I was in God's service, how could I attend to my own?' "

Abul Khair Aqta had a running sore in his foot which could not be cured, and therefore the physicians decided to amputate it. His disciples advised the physicians to cut it while he was in *salat* (prayer) because he would be totally absorbed at that time and would not know what was happening. Consequently his foot was amputated during *salat* and he did not feel any pain.

It is related of Hadhrat Abu Bakr that he used to recite the Qur'an in a low voice during *salat*; while Hadhrat Umar used to recite it loudly. When the Prophet (s.a.w.) asked them the reason, Hadhrat Abu Bakr said, "God can hear me whether I recite loudly or in a low voice." Hadhrat Umar said, "I do so to awaken those who are sleeping and to scare away Satan." The Prophet (s.a.w.) advised Abu Bakr to raise his voice slightly and Umar to lower it slightly so that they were no longer slaves of habit.

Likewise, some of the Sufi shaikhs pray obligatory *salat* in public and supererogatory *salat* in private to avoid ostentation; while some of them pray both kinds of *salat* in public because, they say, *salat* is truth, and ostentation is falsehood, why should we conceal the truth for fear of falsehood. The real disease, according to them, is ostentation; cure it and say your *salat* anywhere. The Sufi shaikhs are therefore very particular about the observance of the etiquette of prayers and urge their followers (*murids*) to abide by them strictly. A Sufi shaikh has said " I went on travelling for forty years, but did not miss a single *salat* in congregation. And for every Friday prayer I used to go to some city to offer it. [Friday prayers are compulsory only in the cities not small villages where the number of people (males) are too small in number].

The rules of *salat* are too many to be described here fully. Since love is one of the most important requirements of *salat*, I would now talk a little about it.

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

Love and Matters Connected with It

God has said: "O believers, whosoever ignores the commands of religion, Allah will certainly bring a community whom He will love and who will love Him." [5:54]

He has also said: "Some people worship idols and love them as they ought to love God. It is the believers who love Him best." [2:165]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said: "I heard Jibrail saying that: God has said, he who opposes any friend of Mine declares war on Me. And I do not hesitate to take any body's life as I hesitate to take the life of My faithful servant who dislikes death and whom I dislike to hurt, but death is inevitable. And when a servant of Mine tries to seek My nearness (Qurb) through supererogatory worship, I love him; and when I love him I get so close to him that I become his eyes and he sees by Me; I become his ears, and he hears by Me; I become his tongue and he speaks by Me; I become his hands and he works by Me; I become his feet and he walks by Me; and I give him whatever he desires."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said: "Allah loves to meet those who love to meet Him and dislikes to meet those who dislike to meet Him."

He also said: "When Allah loves a man, he says to Jibrail: 'O Jibrail, I love such and such a man, you love him as well.' So Jibrail starts to love him and tells all the angels to love him as God loves him. And then all the angels love him; and God blesses him so much that all the inhabitants of earth love him too. The opposite is the case with the hated ones."

It must be remembered that the love of God for man, and the love of man for God, stands proven by the Qur'an and Hadith, and the consensus of the whole Ummah. Undoubtedly God is the possessor of such beautiful qualities that He really deserves to be loved and loves those who love Him.

The word *muhabbat* (love) is derived from the root '*hibbah*' which means seed that bears fruit when it is concealed in the earth. Love has been likened to the seed because, (like everything else), it is the seed of God's love in the heart of man, that develops and blossoms in man's life, like the flowers and fruit that come out of a seed.

When prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) was blessed with love and friendship (*khullah*) he detached himself from the rest of creation and devoted himself to God so much that the whole universe appeared to him as a veil and therefore he cried out: "Everything excepting God is my enemy."

Shibli has therefore said:

"Love is called *muhabbat* because it obliterates everything from the heart except the Beloved."

Some people are of the opinion that the word *muhabbat* is derived from the root '*hubb*' which means love and is one of the attributes of the heart and the cause of its subsistence. Others think that it is derived from the word '*hubab*' (bubbles) which comes into being by the force of rainfall, and since love is also a force of emotion in the heart it is called '*hubb*' (love).

As the body subsists by the soul, the heart subsists by love, and love subsists by Divine presence and union. According to some, *hubb* is another name of pure love, as in Arab usage the pure white part of the human eye is called '*habbatul insan*', just as the pure black spot in the heart is called '*habbatul qalb*', the former being the place of vision and the latter of love. A poet says, "My heart is jealous of my eyes which enjoy the vision of the Beloved. And my eyes are jealous of my heart which enjoys His union."

Section

Know that the word love is used by the *ulama* (theologians) in three different senses. In the first place love is a passion, a fire and an urge for the homogenous beloved in the heart of the lover. But all these kinds of yearnings do not apply to God who is Eternal and not homogenous. "He is exalted far above everything," [31:9], says God in the Qur'an.

Secondly, love connotes Divine Grace and Benevolence, which He confers on His friends, special blessings and favours of love and intimacy to gain perfection, sainthood and the power of miraculous deeds.

Thirdly, it means the beautiful praise of the man of God in lieu of his good deeds. A section of scholastics assert that the word 'love' (of man for God) has no reality, and is used only symbolically just as God's hand, face and His sitting on the throne (*arsh*) are used symbolically and have no reality from the standpoint of both reason and revelation, and therefore we affirm them and believe in them, but reserve our judgment with regard to their validity. What these people mean is that this word 'love' is inapplicable to God. I will now explain what it means.

The love of God for man is the name of His kindness and mercy to him. It is just an attribute of God like His attributes of pleasure, anger mercy, etc. all of which combine to be called His Will (*iradah*), out of which spring all His actions. In short, the love of God for man is another name for His extreme kindness, mercy and favour to save him from punishment in the hereafter, to exalt him to His nearness, to save him from dependence on others, to detach him from the rest of creation and attach him to Himself, and to bestow upon him special favours. Harith Muhasibi, Junaid and other Sufi shaikhs together with the scholars of jurisprudence of *Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jamaah* hold the same opinion.

As regards their opinion that Divine Love is the name of God's praise for man by virtue of his good deeds, God's praise is His word (*kalam*), which is uncreated (*ghair makhlooq*). As such, how can it be possible for the created to have any connection with the uncreated. As for those who assert that God's love is the name of His grace (*ihsan*), *ihsan* is also one of his actions. All these views about love are substantively similar.

Actually the love for God is the name of an urge in the heart of the true believer in the form of respect and esteem for God, and the desire to gain His nearness, vision and union, so much so that he gets restless for the Divine Beloved, is always absorbed in his remembrance, severs all connections with the world, clears his mind of all the desires other than God and gets totally attached to Him. But man's love for God is not of the same type as his love for human beings, because in the latter case the lover wants to win over and possess the object of his love, while in the former case, he wants to surrender himself to his Beloved and loses his existence in God to finally subsist by Him. Therefore, in Sufism, the best lover is he who annihilates himself completely because the created cannot become one with the Creator without annihilating himself. There is, thus, no difficulty or misunderstanding for those who understand this view point about love.

Commentary: The state of self-annihilation is called *fana-fi-Allah* and the state of subsisting by God is called *baqa-bi-Allah*. These two terms have already been explained in this book.

Kinds of Love

Love is of two kinds. Firstly, man's love for human beings which is really the desire for touching and embracing the beloved. Secondly, the love for the non-homogeneous Creator, in which the lover finds peace of mind, and tries to achieve His vision. Similarly, the lovers are of two kinds. Those who love God because of His bounties and gifts, and those who love the Beloved for Himself and regard His bounties and gifts as veils. According to the latter, God's bounties should serve as a means to an end which is God Himself, and not an end in themselves. In short, the existence of love for God is unanimously agreed upon by all sections of people and in all books of etymology and none of the intellectuals have denied it.

Amongst the Sufi shaikhs, Samnun al-Muhib is particularly famous for his doctrine of love. According to him, love is the only means of gaining Divine Nearness while the states (*ahwal*) and stations (*maqamat*) are just the stages of the journey. He is also of the opinion that while love for human beings is fraught with decline (*ziwal*) and dangers (*khatrat*), love for God is immune from such perils, and that the road of love is open for all to tread upon. And this is what all the Sufi shaikhs are unanimous upon. Now, since the word love has been generally misused, and made applicable to all sorts of creatures, the divines have given it the name of *safwat*, and the lover therefore is called Sufi.

And when the lovers of God have completely surrendered their will to the Will of God, a section of shaikhs, gave love the name of *faqr*, and the lover was termed as *faqir*. *Safwat* and *faqr* have already been explained in this book.

In this connection, Samnun al-Muhib says, "According to the ascetics (*zahidin*), love is more manifest than holy war; according to penitents, it is easier than weeping and crying; according to the Turks, it is more well known than the hunting bag; according to the Hindus, it is better to be a slave of love than a slave of Mahmud of Ghazna; according to the Romans, the legend of love is more well known than the legend of hanging and the gallows; and according to the Arabs, love is a full-fledged branch of learning and the stories of sorrows and happiness, and of success and failure are household words amongst all the tribes and clans of Arabia."

It is clear from all the sayings mentioned above that there is not a single human being who has not tasted the fruit of love, or has not experienced its charms, or has not been intoxicated with it, or has not been annihilated by it. This is because love is ingrained in the very nature of man. It is food for the heart. The heart which has no love is a lump of flesh. Love is a force which cannot be subdued or suppressed by effort. It has charms unknown anywhere in the world.

Says Umar bin Uthman Makki in his book *Kitab-ul-Muhabbat* (Book of Love), "God created the hearts seven thousand years before creating the bodies, and kept them in a state of nearness. He created the souls seven thousand years before creating the hearts,

and kept them in the station of intimacy (*uns*). He created the secrets (*sirrha*) seven thousand years before creating the souls, and kept them in the station of unity (*wasl*)."

Then He revealed the lustre of His Beauty to the *sirr* three hundred and sixty times daily and looked towards it graciously for three hundred times daily. But when they surveyed the entire universe and saw nothing more precious than themselves, vanity and arrogance overtook them. God, therefore, subjected them to tests and trials by imprisoning the heart in the spirit, the spirit in the soul, and the soul in the body. He then bestowed reason upon them and sent prophets to guide them. Thereafter, everyone was told to seek the Beloved. Consequently, the body was engaged in prayer, the soul in love, the spirit in nearness, and the heart found happiness in union with Him.

But what love is, in reality, cannot be described by the word "love", for love is a feeling and feelings cannot be expressed by words. Love cannot be attained even if the whole world tries for it, nor can it be repelled even if the whole world tries for it. This is because love is a Divine Gift and cannot be achieved by effort. Man is finite but love is infinite, and the finite has no control over the infinite. God knows best.

Section

Love: *Ishq*

What is "*ishq*"? *Ishq* is excessive love about which the opinions of the Sufi shaikhs are divided. Some maintain that excessive love for God by man, and not for man by God, is possible because, according to them, the lover is he who cannot reach God. But it is not impossible for God to reach man. They, therefore, argue that man can love God excessively but God cannot have the intensity of love for man. There is another section of people who think that it is not possible to love God excessively because excessive love involves going beyond limits, whereas God is unlimited. There are some who deny the possibility of intensive love for God, both in this world and in the hereafter, because the object of love is total comprehension of the object of love, whereas God is incomprehensible. However, simple love (not excessive) for God is possible, because love can be for any attribute of God which cannot be called comprehension.

There are others who hold that as *ishq* is not possible without vision, and because God cannot be seen in this world, *ishq* with God is not possible. However, since ordinary love can be generated by hearing, this kind of love is possible for Him. Now since God's Essence (*dhat*) is imperceptible, *ishq* for Him is not possible. However, since it is the Divine attributes of kindness and generosity which have an attraction for man, love for Divine attributes is possible. You know Prophet Ya'qub (Jacob) was absorbed in love for Yusuf (Joseph) from whom he was separated. And he regained his eyesight when he smelt his son's shirt. But Zulaikha did not regain her eyesight until she met Yusuf although she was ready to die for him. It is also said that since God and love have no opposite, *ishq* for Him is possible. There are many more sayings about love which have been left out for reasons of brevity.

Section

I will now state some of the innumerable subtle sayings (*ramooz*) of the Sufi shaikhs briefly. Master Abul Qasim Qushairi says, "Love is the annihilation of the lover's attributes, and affirmation of the Beloved's Essence." The Beloved's existence (*baqa*) is understood only when the lover is annihilated (*fana*). It is not possible for the lover to both retain his individuality as well as gain Divine Union. As soon as he knows that the Beloved's *baqa* is possible only when he is obliterated, he hastens to annihilate himself, because as long as the lover retains his individuality, he is veiled from God. When Hussain bin Mansur was hanged, his last words were, "It is necessary for the lover to efface his being and become one with the Beloved (*ifrad*)."

Commentary: To become one with the Beloved is the stage of *fana-fi-Allah*. The original Arabic word mentioned in this verse is '*ifrad*' and not *fana*, because *ifrad* is somewhat different from *fana*, which is not the final destination of the spiritual pilgrim. The final destination is *ifrad*. After *fana* is the stage of *fana-ul-fana* (annihilation of annihilation), when two negatives are put together making a positive. When the lover loses his being in the Divine Being, it is called *fana*. But *fana* of *fana* (annihilation of annihilation) is positive. It means regaining his selfhood (his individuality) after losing it. But this time the individual is no more the erstwhile individual as he was before starting. Now he is the Vicegerent of God on earth, capable of seeing by God, hearing by God, doing everything by God's power and speaking with God's tongue as indicated in Hadith-al-Qudsi (Bukhari). In other words, at the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah*, the seeker (*salik*) lives in God so that God's attributes become his attributes. And this explains the phenomenon of miracles and supernatural deeds.

But Hallaj's life shows he did not reach the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah*. He was thoroughly intoxicated in *fana*. It seems he misunderstood the cult of *tafrid*. According to the Sufi masters, *tafrid* (to become *fard*) is the final stage in Sufism. When they complete their mission of guidance, appoint their successors and retire again into maximum *fana* called *tafrid* and become one with the One, at this stage they are known as *afrad*. But Hallaj made the mistake of going into maximum *fana* prematurely i.e. without gaining the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah* and therefore his un-Islamic utterances "I am God" was said in a fit of ecstasy or extreme intoxication which could have been excused, but the *ulama*, including his own spiritual guide, Junaid of Baghdad, passed the death sentence against him, not only to safeguard against heretical behaviour in future but to warn the budding Sufis to exercise strict restraint over loose thinking and extravagant utterances.

Abu Yazid Bistami has said: "Love is when you regard your excessive worship as insignificant and inadequate, but regard a little of God's favour as big as a mountain." This is what God does to mankind. He has blessed mankind with untold gifts and bounties in the world, but calls it insignificant in the following verse: "The bounties of God in the world are nothing." But has regarded remembrance of God by men and women as *kathir* (tremendous).

Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari says, "Love means the acceptance of obedience and the rejection of disobedience." The more you love God the greater is your obedience to Him. This view point refutes the view of the heretics who are of the opinion that when you reach God, worship becomes redundant. The fact is that in Islam worship never becomes unnecessary however high your position in spirituality; the whole Muslim *ummah* is unanimous in saying that the *shariat* of Muhammad (s.a.w.) is never abrogated because if one person is exempted, why not all? This is clear apostasy. However, the case of those who are overwhelmed by ecstasy and insanity is different. But it is quite possible for the seeker to reach such a stage of Divine Nearness when worship becomes easy for him, because the more he worships the greater are the charms of union.

This is illustrated by the life of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who stood in prayers the whole night and his feet became swollen, then God Almighty advised him to decrease his worship by saying, "We have not sent the Qur'an to thee to torture thee." It is also possible that one may forget, in a fit of happiness, that he is worshipping like the Prophet (s.a.w.) who said: "Verily, when my heart is overwhelmed by Divine lights, I asked for God's forgiveness seventy times daily."

Another meaning is that "I ask God to bring seventy veils in between to save me." This is because the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not attach much importance to his deeds and whatever he did, he considered it unworthy of God's splendour and glory.

Samnun al-Muhib say: "The lovers of God have won all the wealth of this world and of the hereafter, because the Prophet has said that in the hereafter a man will be close to the object of his love." Now who is the greater winner than those who live in God's presence day and night and are incapable of committing sin in that state of nearness?

Yahya Muadh Razi says: "Real love can neither be decreased by unkindness nor increased by kindness." This is because both kindness and unkindness are the means; the end is God's love. When you have reached the end , the means lose their importance. Moreover, unkindness of the Beloved becomes kindness for the true lover. He loves to be afflicted by the Beloved.

It is said that when Shibli was confined to imprisonment because of insanity, some friends of his went to see him. He said from inside the room, "Who are you?" "Your friends,"

they answered. As soon as they said this, Shibli started pelting them with stones and they ran away. At this he said, "Had you been my friends you would not have fled from my stones."

Commentary: A poet has said:

If you kill me I am happy,
If you don't I am happy;
My happiness is Thy will,
My happiness is Thy will.

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

Lifting of the Sixth Veil: Regarding *Zakat* (Compulsory Tax for the Poor)

God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"Be regular in *salat* (prayers) and in paying *zakat*." [2:43]

There are numerous *ayat* of the Qur'an and Hadith which are eloquent on the payment of *zakat*, which is one of the five pillars of Islam. It is payable by the rich to the poor. It is obligatory duty (*fardh*) for those who qualify for it. For instance, anyone who possesses at least two hundred dirhams (silver coins) or its equivalent twenty dinars (gold coins), is duty-bound to pay five dirhams or half a dinar, respectively. If he is in possession of five camels he has to give away one goat as *zakat*. In this way the law is applicable to all sorts of possessions. It is incumbent even on the attainment of worldly dignity (*jah*) as the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Verily God has made it obligatory for you to pay *zakat* of dignity as He has made it obligatory to pay *zakat* of your property." He has also said, "Everything is subject to *zakat*. The *zakat* of a house is a guest room."

Zakat is really a kind of gratitude to the Almighty for bestowing wealth on mankind. Similarly health is also a favour of God, and the *zakat* is on the limbs to remain engaged in prayers and not to waste time in useless activities. *Zakat* is likewise necessary for inner spiritual wealth which is an infinite blessing of the Almighty, and therefore, necessitates infinite *zakat* in terms of infinite thanksgiving and gratitude.

But the Sufi shaikhs do not consider it desirable to pay *zakat* on worldly wealth because they think it is avaricious in the extreme to hoard one hundred dirhams and then give away five dirhams as *zakat*. They are so generous that they never keep a hundred coins for a year (while the poor cannot afford a meal a day). Once a theologian asked Shibli

(as a test) what was the rate of *zakat*. He said: "When greed allows you to hoard two hundred coins, you have to pay five coins according to your religion. But according to my religion, it is highly improper to hoard and pay *zakat*." When asked what was his authority, he said, "My authority is Abu Bakr, the Veracious (*Siddiq*) who gave away all he had; and when the Prophet (s.a.w.) asked him what he had left for his family, he replied, 'God and His Prophet'." Similarly Ali (the fourth caliph of the Prophet) is reported to have said, "*Zakat* is not incumbent on me. How can a generous Muslim hoard money and pay *zakat*."

It is true that the property of the generous is the property of all where greed is unknown. But it is foolishness on the part of anyone to say that he need not learn the rules of *zakat* because he does not possess anything. It is necessary to learn the rudiments of Islam, and to deny it amounts to infidelity. It is one of the evils of the present age that many pretenders reject knowledge as unnecessary. This happened to me once when I was speaking to some Sufis about the merits of *zakat* on camels, an ignorant Sufi got up and said: "I neither possess camels nor is it necessary for me to possess the knowledge of *zakat*." I said to him: "O young man, if knowledge of giving *zakat* is not necessary, the knowledge of taking *zakat* is necessary for you. If someone gives you more than what is due, it is illegal for you to take it. It shows that knowledge is necessary."

There were some Sufi shaikhs who accepted *zakat* and some who declined it. Those who resorted to *faqr* (renunciation) voluntarily refused to accept it saying that neither did they hoard wealth to pay *zakat* nor did they accept *zakat*. They particularly refused to accept it from the worldly people lest their hand becomes lower than the upper hand of the giver, since the Prophet (s.a.w.) appreciated the upper hand and deprecated the lower hand in a Hadith.

There were others who accepted *zakat* in poverty with the intention to relieve the rich Muslim brothers of the obligation (*fardh*) of paying it. In that case, their hand becomes upper and that of the rich lower, in accordance with the following verse, "And he (the Prophet) accepts *zakat*."

In this Hadith, the Prophet (s.a.w.) as a receiver is regarded superior to the giver. The Dervishes prefer the benefits of the hereafter over those of this world and as such consider it their duty to relieve their Muslim brothers of the duty of paying *zakat* and save them from punishment on the Day of Judgement. Thus the upper hand is necessarily that of the Dervishes. If the receiver's hand were the lower one, as the Anthropomorphists think, the Prophet's hand would be the lower one. But the hand of the prophets are really the upper hand because they accept their rights under God's command and spend it for the good of the community.

Similarly, the worthy successors of the Prophet (s.a.w.) received payment of *zakat*, deposited it with the state treasury (*Bait-ul-Mal*) and spent it for the good of the *ummah*. It is therefore, wrong to say that the giver's hand is the upper (superior) hand and that

of the receiver's is the lower (inferior). This is what the Sufi shaikhs did. Now I turn to the merits of generosity and bountifulness.

Section

Regarding Bountifulness (*Jud*) and Generosity (*Sakha*)

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "The generous is nearer to paradise and farther from hell. And the miser is nearer to hell and farther from paradise." According to the Muslim theologists, the words bountiful and generous are synonymous although God is called Bountiful (*Jawwad*), and not generous (*sakhi*), in the Qur'an and Hadith. The orthodox scholars of Islam are unanimous on the principle that God should not be called by any name not mentioned in the Qur'an and Hadith. For instance, the words *alim* and *faqih* are synonymous, but He is called *Alim* (knower) by virtue of His attribute of knowledge and not *faqih* (jurist) since the word *faqih* lacks the attribute of *ilm.*

Similarly, God can be called Bountiful (*Jawwad*) by virtue of His attribute of Bounty, but He cannot be called Generous (*Sakhi*) because this word '*sakhi*' lacks the attribute of Bountifulness.

Some people think that the words bountifulness and generosity are not synonymous. According to them, the generous is he who discriminates between the deserving and non-deserving, while the bountiful is he who does not discriminate between them. These two qualities are illustrated by the example of Hadhrat Ibrahim and Hadhrat Muhammad, peace be upon them. Hadhrat Ibrahim was in the habit of taking meals only when a guest ate with him. Once no guest came for three days and he did not eat anything. At last a guest arrived, but when asked who he was, the guest replied that he was a fire worshipper. There upon Hadhrat Ibrahim refused to entertain him. God reproached him by saying, "You refused to give a piece of bread to one whom I have nourished for seventy years." But when the son of Hatim Tai came to visit Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) he spread his own mantle (*chadar*) on the ground for him saying, "Honour the chieftain of the tribe who comes to visit you." In this case, Prophet Ibrahim's position was of generosity and that of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was of bountifulness. The best policy in this respect is to act according to the first thought that crosses your mind, since the first thought is from God, the second is the result of miserliness (*bukhl*).

It is said that there was a merchant in Nishapur who used to visit Shaikh Abu Saeed frequently. Once when he was there, a poor man asked the shaikh to give him some money. The merchant had a *dinar* (gold coin) along with a small silver coin. First he thought of giving the gold coin to the man, but on second thought he gave him the silver coin. When the man went away, the merchant asked the shaikh if it is possible to differ from God. He said, "You differed from God when He bade you give the gold coin, but you gave the silver coin to the beggar."

I have read in a book that once Shaikh Abu Abdullah Muhammad Rodbari went to the house of one of his *murids*, but found him missing. On this he told another *murid* to take all the effects of the house to the market and sell them. When that first *murid* returned home, he was pleased to see that his shaikh had taken the liberty to sell the effects as if they belonged to him. But his wife took ill of it and taking off her dress, she flung it on the ground saying that, that also was included in the household effects.

Commentary: The shaikh ordered the *murid*'s property to be sold in the market either to test him or he found it to be redundant. But his wife was either too miserly to surrender the property or was not as advanced spiritually as her husband and therefore took exception to the shaikh's action.

Shaikh Abdullah bin Sahl Tustari has said: "A Sufi is he who does not mind the shedding of his blood, and taking away of his property." I also met Shaikh Abu Muslim Farsi who said: "Once I went to Makkah with a party and we were attacked by the Kurds near Halawan and were deprived of all we had, but we exercised patience and kept quiet. However, one of our companions got excited and started shouting, whereupon a Turk drew his sword and came upon him to kill him. We intervened and asked him the reason why he was out to kill him. He said, 'Because he is not a Sufi, and is disloyal to the saints, also because I saw that he had pieces of bread in his bag; it does not become a Sufi to keep eatables when his comrades are starving. We people have been engaged in plundering the Sufis for long to relieve them of their worldly effects so that they are purified.' "

Hadhrat Abdullah bin Ja'far says, "Once I came across a Negro who was tending a flock of goats. As he sat down to take his meal a dog arrived and sat nearby. He threw a piece of bread to the dog who finish it quickly and started looking at him. He gave another piece to him, which again was eaten by the dog quickly. The Negro gave yet another piece, which was eaten up in the same haste. On this I asked him, 'How much bread do you get daily from your master?' He said 'No more than what you have seen.' 'Then why did you give all the bread to the dog?' I inquired. He replied, 'This is not a place for dogs to live. It seems to be a strange dog who has come from afar, and I did not like to deprive him of food and eat all the bread myself.' " Hadhrat Abdullah bin Ja'far was very pleased with him and purchased the whole flock from the owner and gave it to the Negro. But look at his generosity! He gave away all the goats in charity, and went away!

A man came to Hadhrat Hasan bin Ali (r.a.) and said he owed four hundred dirhams to somebody. Hadhrat Hasan gave him the money and went into his house crying. When asked why he wept he said, "Because I did not give him the money without his asking. Had I done so I would have saved him from the humiliation of begging."

Shaikh Abu Sahl Sa'luki used to give charity by placing the money on the ground to be picked up by the recipient. When he was asked to state the reason he said, "Worldly

goods are too worthless to be put in the hands of Muslims, so that my hand is the upper and his is the lower."

Once the King of Habsha presented two pounds of perfume to the Prophet (s.a.w.) who threw it in a pond of water and rubbed his hands over the bodies of his companion. Hadhrat Anas says once a chieftain of a tribe came to see the Prophet of Islam. The Prophet (s.a.w.) presented to him a big flock of goats grazing in the valley between two hills. The chief was so impressed that on going back he told his people to embrace Islam since Muhammad's (s.a.w.) generosity knew no bounds nor was he afraid of poverty.

It is also related by Anas that once the Prophet (s.a.w.) was presented a sum of eighty thousand dirhams. He placed it under his pillow and then started distributing it. He got up only when the amount was finished. Hadhrat Ali says, "It was the time the Prophet had tied a stone over his belly to mitigate the pangs of hunger."

Once I saw a Dervish who was presented three hundred gold coins by a King, and he gave the whole amount to the people around him and went away.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

Lifting of the Seventh Veil: on *as-Sawm* (Fasting)

God Almighty has said:

"O, believers, fasting is ordained on you." [2:183]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"God says fasting is for Me, and I am the reward thereof."

What can be a greater reward than Allah Himself.

Commentary: The exoteric meaning of this Hadith is that those who fast to please God, are rewarded by God Himself. But the explanation is hardly tenable since it is God who rewards all good deeds. How can fasting be an exception? The real meaning as interpreted by the Sufis which is quite feasible, is that God Himself is the reward of those who fast for His sake. In other words, one gains God's nearness and union by fasting, more than any other deed of worship. The Sufi *shaikhs* have said: "Fasting is one half of the spiritual journey to God." This is what the author means by saying: "What can be a greater reward than Allah Himself."

Fasting is a kind of worship which has a spiritual significance more than any other form of worship. It has nothing to do with material gains. It is an act of supreme sacrifice which brings infinite recompense. It is said that entry into paradise is on the basis of other deeds of worship and a permanent stay in it is on account of fasting. This is because God has said "I am the reward thereof."

Junaid has said: "Fasting is half the journey." I have seen such Sufi *shaikhs* who are always fasting, while there are others who fast only in the month of Ramadhan. Those who are always fasting do it for gaining Divine Nearness, while those who fast only during Ramadhan do it because of sheer obedience to God and to avoid ostentation (*riya*). I have also seen some shaikhs who fast but nobody knows about it, because when food is brought to them they have it. This is what the Prophet (s.a.w.) did.

Commentary: This is applicable to voluntary fasting and not to the fasting in Ramadhan which is of a compulsory nature. Hadhrat Ayesha and Hafsa say, "Once the Prophet came to us and we offered him some sweets. He said, 'Bring it although I am fasting. I will have it and fast another day instead'."

Now a question arises why was it necessary for the Prophet (s.a.w.) to fast another day when his fast was of a voluntary nature? The answer is that it is one of the principles of Islam that when someone starts doing voluntary worship, but has to give it up for some reason, for instance giving up *salat* due to nullification of *wudhu* (ablution), it becomes incumbent on him to repeat that worship.

I have seen some shaikhs who fasted during *ayam-i-beez,*[1] *ashura* (first two days of Muharram) and the whole month of Rajab, Sha'ban and Ramadhan. There are others who fast like the Prophet Daud, on alternate days which the Prophet (s.a.w.) liked and called *khairus-siyam* (the best way of fasting).

Once I went to Shaikh Ahmad Bukhari who bade me to eat *halwa* (sweet dish) lying before him. But I refused the offer, saying I was fasting. When he asked the reason why I was fasting, I said, "In conformity with such and such saint." He said, "It is un-Islamic for one human being to act in conformity to another human being." But when I intended to break my fast, he said, "Do not break the fast in conformity to me, as I also am a human being."

As a matter of fact, the purpose of fasting is to curb the force of the lower self (*nafs*) which embraces the entire philosophy of the Sufi doctrine. The least significant benefit of fasting is remaining hungry. And hunger has been admired as a "feast given by God" to the Sufi shaikhs. Not only that, the sages of every religion and community have praised hunger as the best means of purification. So fasting for one month (Ramadhan) in a year is obligatory for every Muslim man and woman who has reached the age of puberty and is of sound health. The month of fasting begins from the first day of Ramadhan and continues till the last day of the month, with a fresh affirmation and greater intensity

[1] *Ayam-i-beez* are the thirteenth, fourteenth and fifteenth days of a lunar month.

of sincerity and love every day. Fasting involves not only abstinence from eating and drinking but also from eating ones' fill, guarding the eyes from lustful looks, the ears from hearing evil things, the tongue from talking ill of somebody behind his back, and the mind from thoughts of anything other than God, in accordance with the following Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.): "When you are fasting let your ears fast, your eyes fast and all your limbs fast." He has also said: "Most of you gain nothing through fasting except hunger and thirst."

I, Ali bin Uthman al- Jallabi, saw the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) in a dream and requested him to give me a word of advice. He said, "control your senses." The fact is that control over the senses constitutes the whole doctrine of *mujahidah* (self purification), because all knowledge is gained through these five doors, eyes, ears, nose, tongue and the sense of touch which is spread over the whole body. These five senses are like the five army commanders of knowledge and reason. The eye is the organ of seeing the shapes and colours of things; the ear is the organ of hearing sounds; the tongue gives the knowledge of good and bad taste; and the nose tells us what is a pleasant or an unpleasant smell; but there is no particular organ of touch. It is spread over the whole body and gives us the knowledge of hot and cold, hard and soft, etc. We know everything through these senses except intuition and Divine Inspiration.

Another thing is that while there is no evil involved in intuition and Divine Inspiration, the knowledge acquired through the five physical senses is not immune from evil. They are the source of both good and evil. For instance, the eyes and ears provide us with the knowledge of God as well as of falsehood and lust. The same is the case with the tongue and nose by which both right and wrong can be acquired. It is, therefore, the duty of one who is fasting to have strict control over all his senses so that disobedience is turned into obedience, and the fast becomes real. To abstain merely from eating and drinking is not difficult. It can be done by the women and children. Real fasting is abstaining from sensuous pleasures, falsehood, vulgar talk and back-biting and not only from food and drink. God has said:

"Nor did we give them bodies that ate no food," [21:8]

He has also said:

"Do you think We have created you in jest? (i.e. for nothing)" [23:115]

So real fasting is abstinence from sin and not only from eating and drinking. I laugh at those who keep voluntary fasts but ignore compulsory worship, for voluntary fasting is a *sunnat*, while giving up sinful deeds is *fardh* (obligation). May God save us from sins. When you guard yourself from sin all your deeds become fasts.

It is related that when Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari was born he was fasting and when he died he was fasting. The day he was born he did not take milk till sunset. And when he died he was also keeping a fast.

But the Prophet (s.a.w.) has forbidden continuous fasting (*sawm-al-wisal*). When he resorted to continuous fasting and the companions tried to imitate him he prevented them from doing so saying: "I am not like anyone of you. I spend the night with my Lord who gives me food and drink."

Commentary: *Sawm-al-wisal* (continuous fast) means fasting continuously without eating or drinking in the morning and evening unlike in the month of Ramadhan when it is permissible to eat and drink before dawn and after sunset. The Prophet (s.a.w.) fasted like this for several days on end.

The spiritual enthusiasts maintain that this prohibition on the part of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was in the nature of a kindness and not of an order. It is related that Sahl bin Abdullah used to eat after fifteen days; and did not eat and drink anything during the whole month of Ramadhan except on the day of Eid (first of next month), and with this he performed four hundred bowings of salat every night. This is beyond human power and is not possible without Divine Grace which itself becomes nourishment. This means that some live on food and for some Divine Grace is the food.

It is stated that Shaikh Abu Nasar Sarraj who is known to be the Peacock of Saints (*taus-al-fuqara)*, went to Baghdad in Ramadhan and remained in the state of *i'tikaf* (intense devotion) in a room in the mosque area. He was accepted as *imam* to lead the *tarawih* prayers (twenty bowings) every night, and he finished the whole Qur'an five times over in the sacred month. Every night a servant would bring a loaf of bread for him and place it quietly in the room. On the day of Eid when he went out to say Eid prayers, the servant went in the room and saw the thirty loaves of bread lying intact.

Ali bin Bakr has said that Shaikh Hafs Masisi used to eat after fifteen days in Ramadhan, and that Ibrahim bin Adham did not eat or drink anything during Ramadhan, although he used to cut wheat on wages during the hot days of summer to feed the dervishes and stand in prayers every night from sunset to morning.

It is related that when Shaikh Abu Abdullah died he had completed forty *chillahs* of forty days each without eating and sleeping. I met a dervish who used to do two *chillahs* every year in the desert. I was present when Shaikh Abu Muhammad Danishmand died. He did not eat for eighty days although he never missed a single prayer in congregation (*jamaat*). There were two dervishes in Merv. One was called Mas'ud and the other Abu Ali Siyah. Mas'ud sent a message to Abu Ali to come and perform a *chillah* of forty days without eating. Abu Ali's reply was, "Come and we will eat three times a day and remain with *wudhu* (without answering the call of nature) for forty days."

The controversy about *sawm-al-wisal* (continual fast) is still raging. The ignorant think it is possible and the physicians think it is impossible. I will now go into the matter in

detail to end the controversy for good. It should be remembered that to keep continuous fast without violating any of the Divine Commands is nothing but a *karamat* (miracle) which can be performed by the elite and not common folks. If it were possible for the common people then everybody would be a Muslim and the elite and gnostics would not be compensated for gnosis. It is for this reason that the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) who was competent to perform miracles, resorted to continuous fasting, and forbade his followers who were capable of *karamat*, (ordinary supernatural deeds), to perform miracles because prophethood has to be proclaimed and sainthood is to be concealed in Islam. This is the difference between a miracle (*mu'jizat*) and an ordinary supernatural deed (*karamat*).

Commentary: It is one of the important tenets of Islam to believe that (*mu'jizat*) is the speciality of the prophets, while ordinary supernatural deeds performed by any other than a prophet are called (*karamat*). This is to distinguish between the competence of the prophets and of the saints. *Mu'jizat* literally means such a miraculous deed which can silence the opponents. The word *mu'jizat* is derived from *ijz* which means inability.

So far as *chillah* is concerned, it is derived from the forty days of solitude of Prophet Musa (Moses) mentioned in the Qur'an [7:138]. When the Sufi shaikhs want to hear God's words spiritually they go into forty days *chillah* (without eating and sleeping). However, they clean their teeth to avoid bad smell. After forty days of intense worship and devotion they spiritually hear the word of God. But since the hearing of God's word is not possible without getting rid of the beastly nature of the human ego, therefore the forty days *chillah* is necessary to tame the beast or subdue the evils of human nature.

Section

On Hunger and Matters Related to It

God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"We subject you to trials by fear, hunger and loss in property and in harvests...." [2:155]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "A hungry inner self is dearer to God than seventy heedless worshippers."

Know that the merits of hunger have been admired and appreciated by all religions and communities of the world, because outwardly it sharpens the intellect and purifies the body and mind. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Make your bellies hungry, your livers thirsty and your bodies naked (undecorated) so that your hearts may see visions of God in the world."

Although hunger is a torture (*bala*) for the body, it is a torch (*zia*) for the heart (*qalb*); a purification (*safa)* for the soul (*ruh*) and a vision (*liqa*) for the spirit (*sirr*).

Commentary: The original passage in Persian is beautiful, interwoven with rhythmic words like *bala* (affliction) *zia* (light), *safa* (purity) and *liqa* (vision) which constitute the peak of eloquence and speaks volumes. This flow of eloquence permeates the whole book, but cannot be translated.

Therefore, it matters little if immense benefits are gained through a little inconvenience to the body. To eat one's fill is to act as animals. It is certainly not greatness. Had it been greatness, animals also would have been great. Hunger is the cure for physical diseases. Gluttony leads to the construction of the body and destruction of the soul. He who spends his life in a state of spiritual perfection eventually becomes one with God. How can the one who is intoxicated in God, and the one who is intoxicated in the world be equal. The latter spends his life on the nourishment of the body and the former on the nourishment and construction of the soul. The former's ideal is to fill the belly and the latter's aim is God. The former lives to eat and the latter eats to live. Is there no difference between the two? The Sufi *shaikhs* have said: "Hunger is the feast of the saints, the exercise of the *murids* and the defeat of Satan." Letting alone the question of predestination and free will, the cause of Adam's fall and separation from God was just a morsel of food.

He who fasts and feels disturbed does not really fast for God. Because he who is troubled by hunger is like the one who does not fast for God. The real seeker is he who is not afflicted by hunger. He who is afflicted by hunger is a glutton and a slave to his *nafs* (animal self) and a person in the hands of the Satan. Says Kattani: "The real seeker is he who sleeps when overpowered; speaks when he must and eats when he starves." What is starvation? According to some Sufi shaikhs the extent of starvation is to abstain from eating for two days and two nights. Others say it is one week and there are some who say it is forty days, for according to the specialists (*muhaqqiqin*) real appetite is felt only once in forty days which is to preserve life. All else is greed and vanity.

Know that Divine Secrets run through the veins and blood of the Gnostics (*arifin*). Their hearts are illuminated by visions of the Almighty. At the door of the heart are stationed two guards: reason and passion (*hawa*). The former is helped by the spirit (*ruh*) and the latter by *nafs* (lower self). So the more the seeker eats, the stronger is his *nafs* and the greater is his passion. In this way, the whole body is overpowered by the *nafs* and the heart is veiled. But when the seeker eats less, his *nafs* grows weak, his reason becomes strong, and the whole body is illuminated by Divine Light. When the *nafs* is eventually overpowered, falsehood vanishes and truth prevails and the seeker reaches his goal.

Abul Abbas Qassab says: "My fate depends on two loafs of bread. When I take them I am overpowered by greed when I leave them I am overpowered by love for worship." But when

hunger fails to result in vision (*mushahidah*), it is no better than eating, because *mushahidah* is the battlefield of men while *mujahidah* is the playfield of children. Therefore it is said: "Eating accompanied by *mushahidah* is better than hunger without *mushahidah*." God knows best.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

Lifting of the Eighth Veil: On the *Hajj* (Pilgrimage)

Says God Almighty in the Holy Qur'an:

"*Hajj* is obligatory for the sake of Allah, for those who can afford to perform it." [3:97]

Hajj is obligatory for every Muslim who is sound of mind and has reached the age of puberty. It consists of putting on *ihram* (Pilgrim's sheet of cloth) at the place where the bounds of Makkah begin (*miqat*), and during the stay in Arafat and *Tawaf-i-Ziyarat*. The whole *ummah* is unanimous on it. But opinion of the *ulama* is divided on the question of walking between mount Safa and Marwa. But entering the perimeter of the Haram (shrine) of Makkah without the *ihram* for the first time is not permissible. The word *'haram'* literally means the place of peace. It is called Haram (Sacred Area) because it contains the Maqam Ibrahim (station). Maqam means spiritual status. Prophet Ibrahim (a.s.) had two kinds of states. His physical state is Makkah while his spiritual state is *khullat* (friendship).

The pilgrim who is the seeker of the Prophet's physical state has to give up sensual pleasures, wear the *ihram*, as if he is wearing the *kafan* (sheet wound around a corpse), avoid game shooting (hunting), exercise strict control over his *nafs*, visit Arafat, collect stones at Muzdalifah, go back to Makkah for *Tawaf-i-ziyarat*, stay at Mina for three days, throw stones at Satan, cut his hair, perform sacrifice of an animal and remove the *ihram* to put on proper clothes. On the other hand, he who is the seeker of Prophet Ibrahim's state of *khullat* (friendship) must renounce worldly pleasures, give no place in his heart to anything other than God, because the thought of other than God (*ma siwa* Allah) is injurious to spiritual health. Then he should stay at Arafat, the esoteric

significance of which is to get firmly established in gnosis (*ma'rifat*). He should then proceed to Muzdalifah which connotes Divine Intimacy. From the state of intimacy, he must advance to the Ka'bah which signifies the state of becoming absorbed in the Pure Essence, the Absolute Being (*tanzih*). Then he should throw stones on Satan which implies the stoning of his own *nafs*. After that, he should sacrifice a goat which signifies the sacrifice of the lower self at the altar of love for the Divine Beloved and thus attain the state of Ibrahim's *khullat* (friendship). In summary, reaching Hadhrat Ibrahim's state of the body gives protection from enemies, while the attainment of his spiritual state affords protection from being separated from God.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"The *hajis* are a Divine deputation (*wafad*). Allah gives them what they desire."

But there are some shaikhs who neither want anything nor pray for anything like Hadhrat Ibrahim to whom God said: "*Aslum* (surrender)"; he replied: "I surrender to the Lord of Creation." Therefore when he reached the state of *khullat* he broke away from everything other than God. After that, God desired to demonstrate his greatness to the world by handing him over to Nimrod who packed him up in a cow's hide and flung him into the fire with a huge catapult. Just at that moment Jibrail arrived and said to him: "Do you need help." He replied, "Yes, but not from thee."

Commentary: What he meant was that God was enough to help him. This is called absolute trust (*tawakkal)* in God. Although it is permissible in Islam to seek help from others, the elite go a step higher and cannot possibly think of invoking any others' help. This is Hadhrat Ibrahim's state of friendship (*maqam-i-khullat*) which the Sufis aspire for.

When Jibrail asked him, "Why do you not ask for Allah's help." He replied, "I am sure He knows what state I am in." What he meant was that God knew that it was for His sake that he was about to be burnt, so what was the use of praying?

Shaikh Muhammad bin al-Fadhl has said: "I marvel at those who go into the house (Ka'bah) but not for the owner of the house (God)." One cannot visit the house all the time, but visiting the owner of the house is of a constant nature without interruption. If visiting the temple made of stone is possible only once a year, why can you not visit the temple of your heart which is possible all the year round, where the pilgrim is blessed with new gifts every moment and awarded a fresh robe of honour at every step.

Abu Yazid says: "Tell those who expect the reward of their worship tomorrow on the Day of Judgement that they have not worshipped at all, because real worship is that for which reward is given in this very world."

He has also said: "When I went to Makkah for the first time, I saw the house only. When I went for the second time, I saw both the house and the Owner of the house. When I went for the third time, I saw the Owner but the house was missing."

In fact, Ka'bah is meaningful for those who are in a permanent state of *mushahidah* (vision). Those who are not blessed with Divine Vision in everything and do not experience the splendid flames of love at every step, do not know what *walayat* (friendship) is. When you have the Beloved in your bosom, the whole universe is the Ka'bah. If not, you are still veiled. It is rightly said: "The darkest abode in the world is the abode of the Beloved without the Beloved."

So the real Ka'bah is the state of *khullat* or the state of Divine Vision (*mushahidah-i-Haq*) for which *hajj* has been ordained. Ka'bah is the means and God is the end. The means should be regarded only as the means and not as the end. The object of the lovers in treading across mountains and deserts is not the Ka'bah but the owner of the Ka'bah. What a blessed place and what a blessed moment is that when the pilgrim stands face to face with the Beloved Lord. Visiting the building of the Ka'bah is *haram* (forbidden) for the lovers, who desire the *owner* of the building and not the building.

Once a man came to Junaid and said, "Where do you come from?" He replied, "from *hajj*." Junaid said, "When you embarked on the journey did you journey from all sins?" He said "No." Junaid said, "Then you have not embarked on the journey." Junaid said, "When you went from stage to stage (*manzil*) on the way, did you traverse the various stages of nearness to God?" He said, "No." "Then you have not traversed the road." Said Junaid, "When you put on the *ihram* at *miqat* did you relinquish all human attributes?" He said, "No." "Then you did not wear the *ihram*" said Junaid. "When you stayed in Arafat did you stay in *kashf* (vision) of God." He said, "No." "Then you did not stay in Arafat." "When you stayed in Muzdalifah did you get rid of all carnal desires?" He again replied in the negative. Junaid said, "Then you did not stay in Muzdalifah at all. When you went round the Ka'bah in *tawaf*, did you have a vision of God's Beauty?" He again replied, "No." "Then you did not perform *tawaf*" stated Junaid. "When you walked between mount Safa and Marwa, did you understand the reality of Safa and Marwa?" The man said "No." Junaid informed him, "Then you have not performed that ceremony. When you reached Mina did you come out of your corporeal self?" He answered, "No." Junaid told him, "Then you have not gone to Mina. When you reached the altar of sacrifice and killed the goat, did you sacrifice your *nafs* (carnal self) also?" The man gave the same answer as before. "Then you have not performed the sacrifice." Said Junaid, "When you threw stones, did you not throw out your carnal desires?" He replied, "No." "Then you have not performed the stone throwing," stated Junaid. "This shows you have not performed *hajj*. Go back and do it again in the manner I have explained so that you reach Ibrahim's status of *khullat* (friendship of God)."

Fudhail ibn Ayadh says, "At mount Arafat, I saw a young man with his head bowed down while everybody was reciting prayers aloud. I asked him, 'Why do you not pray?'

He said, 'I am worried over the loss of *mushahidah* and cannot utter a word.' Saying this he fell on the ground and died."

Dhunnun Misri says: "In Mina I saw a man sitting silent when everybody was busy performing the sacrifice (killing animals). When I looked at him closely he started his prayer like this: 'O my Lord everybody is giving sacrifice of animals, I too wish to sacrifice myself. Please accept it.' He moved his finger over his neck and fell dead."

There are two kinds of *hajj*; *hajj* of presence with God (*hadhuri*) and *hajj* of separation (*ghaibat*). He who has not been blessed with the vision of God in the Ka'bah, is like the one sitting in his house. And he who has been blessed with the vision in his house is like the one who is sitting in the Ka'bah. This shows that *hajj* is not the name of going to the Ka'bah. It is *mujahidah* (struggle). Again, *hajj* does not depend on *mujahidah*. It depends on God's grace (*fadhl*). In short, *hajj* is not reaching Ka'bah. It is reaching God, i.e. His vision. Now we will explain what *mushahidah* is.

Section

Mushahidah

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Keep your bellies hungry, and your livers thirsty and leave the world alone so that you may see God with the eyes of the heart." He has also said about the state of *ihsan*: "Worship God in the best way so that you see Him. If you cannot see Him, imagine that He sees you."

God said to Prophet Daud (David): "Do you know what my *ma'rifat* (gnosis) is? It is the life of the heart (*qalb*) by My vision."

Abul Abbas bin Ata says about Allah's command: "Those who say our Lord is Allah and are steadfast," [41:30], that it means: "Those who say our Lord is Allah in *mujahidah*, become steadfast in *mushahidah*."

There are two kinds of *mushahidah*: the first is caused by firm faith (*yaqin*) and the second by excessive love, when the lover is so deeply absorbed in love for the Divine Beloved that he sees nothing but Him. Says Muhammad bin Wasia, "I never saw anything without seeing Allah in it, through firm faith." One of the shaikhs has said: "I do not see anything without first seeing Allah in it." This means seeing God (*didar*).

Shibli says: "I never see anything except Allah;" that is to say, through excessive love and intensive *mushahidah*. The former sees creation with his physical eyes and the Creator with his spiritual eyes; while the latter is so absorbed in God that he sees nothing but Him in everything. In other words, the former way is speculative, while the latter

is intuitive or ecstatic in which case logic becomes a veil. This is because he who is absorbed in God knows nothing except Him, and has nothing to do with anything else, and does not love anything else. God said about the Prophet (s.a.w.) during the Night of Ascension:

"His eyes did not swerve nor wander about." [53:17]

That is to say he kept his gaze fixed on the Beloved in intense devotion. When you cease to look at anything other than God, you invariably see God with the inner spiritual eyes.

He has said: "Tell the believers to close their eyes." [24:30]

That is to close the physical eyes against lust and the spiritual eyes against creation. Because he who stops looking at creation with lust with the eyes of *hissar* (head), invariably sees God with the eyes of his *sirr* (spirit). It is said by the Sufi shaikhs:

"The more severe the *mujahidah*, the purer is the *mushahidah* (vision)."

Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari has said, "He who shuts his eyes against God, will never be guided." This is because love for other than God, keeps him away from God, and he who gets absorbed in other than God is ruined. Therefore, according to the Sufi shaikhs of the stage of *mushahidah*, the time spent in *mushahidah* is real life; and the time spent in *ghaibat* (separation) is not life. They call it as death. That is why when Abu Yazid was asked how old he was, he replied, "Four years." When asked to elaborate on it, he said, "I remained veiled from God for seventy years. It has now been four years since I have been blessed with *mushahidah*."

Shibli used to pray like this: "O Lord, conceal paradise and hell somewhere so that you are worshipped without the fear of hell and the reward of paradise."

This is because everybody has an inclination for paradise. In that case the object of prayers becomes paradise and not God, and he who does not pray for God gets veiled from Him.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) told his wife Ayesha (r.a.) that he had not seen God during the Night of Ascension (*Mi'raj*), but he told his cousin ibn Abbas that he saw God on that occasion. This has raised a storm of controversy among the exoteric theologans, but the Sufi shaikhs who know the truth are agreed upon the issue. They end this controversy by saying that when the Prophet (s.a.w.) denied God's vision to Ayesha, he meant seeing through the physical eyes and when he affirmed it to ibn Abbas he meant seeing by the spiritual eyes. This is because Ayesha was an exoteric *(ahl-i-zahir)* while ibn Abbas was an esoteric (*ahl-i-batin)*. The Prophet (s.a.w.) addressed them in terms they could understand.

Commentary: Most of the Prophet's sayings (Hadith) are of this nature. He speaks to everyone in accordance with their standard of understanding. This quality is known as *jawami-ul-kalim* (comprehensive speech). This characteristic of the Prophet's saying is worth remembering and is enough to solve so many controversies which have been going on among the various sects of Islam. Similarly, in the Qur'an, Allah speaks to different classes of people in such terms which have different significance for people of various levels of understanding. The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "The Qur'an has an outer meaning and an inner meaning and that inner meaning has another inner meaning and this continues until seven inner meanings have been revealed," so that people of all levels of understanding may benefit from it.

It is a futile exercise on the part of various sects of the *ummah* to impose their own interpretation of Qur'an and Hadith on others. Every sect has its elite and commoners to fit within the framework of the multiplicity of interpresentations which, in fact is a great boon.

Junaid says: "If God says, 'Behold Me,' I will refuse because the eye is other than God. When I am enjoying *mushahidah* with the spiritual eyes, why should I do it with physical eyes."

Once somebody asked Junaid, "Do you wish to see God?" He said, "No." When he was asked why, he said, "When Prophet Musa (Moses) (a.s.) wished it, he was refused. But when Muhammad (s.a.w.) did not wish it, he got it." Our very desire is the greatest veil, because in love, wishing is forbidden as it turns into a veil. When self-will is curbed *mushahidah* is attained even in this world, and then there is no difference between this world and the next. This world becomes the hereafter, and the hereafter becomes this world.

Abu Yazid said: "There are such Friends of God who would become heretics if they miss God's vision for a single moment in this world or the hereafter." What it means is that they are constantly being fed and nourished on Divine Vision; and the moment it is denied to them they become heretics.

Dhunnun Misri said: "Once I saw some boys throwing stones at a young man in Egypt. When I asked them why they were doing so, they said that he was mad because he says he sees God. When I asked him whether he had said what the boys alleged, he said, 'If I do not see God for a moment I would get veiled. Then how can I worship Him?' "

Some people deny the possibility of seeing God because it presupposes anthropomorphism which is heretical in Islam. But what the Sufi shaikhs mean by seeing God is not seeing God in the physical form, since he has no physical body. It is the same kind of seeing which will be in the hereafter. Now, because God does not have a material body,

there is no difference between seeing Him in this world and in the next. And when the theologians are agreed on seeing God in the hereafter, they should also agree on seeing Him in this world. Those who say that *mushahidah* is possible in this world or in the next, do not mean that they have seen God in this world, because *mushahidah* is possible only with spiritual eyes; but as the tongue belongs to the physical world it cannot describe what belongs to the spiritual world. That is why the Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "I cannot praise Thee as Thou ought to be praised...." This is because he was in the state of spiritual *mushahidah* or oneness with the Lord which cannot be expressed by physical tongue. After this he said, "Thou art what Thou hast said about Thyself. My tongue is incapable of uttering Thy praise, or expressing the state in which I am." A poet has said:

I desired to see my Beloved,
But when I saw Him,
I lost the power of speech.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

Lifting of the Ninth Veil: On Companionship and Allied Topics

God Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"O believers, save yourself and your kith and kin from Hellfire." [66:6]

It means teach them the method or etiquette thereof. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"Good manners (*adab*) are a part of faith."

He has also said:

"My Lord taught me the best of manners."

It must be remembered that the beauty of all affairs, religious or temporal, lies in good manners and decorum. It is unanimously agreed upon by all men whether they are Muslims or non-Muslims that good behaviour is one of the most essential qualities in every walk of life.

Adab (manners) can be divided into three categories:

1. Good manners in dealings with mankind (called *murawwat*).
2. In religion, observance of rules and regulations according to the Prophet's *Sunnah* (way).
3. In the matter of love, obedience to the rules thereof.

These three are interconnected, because he who lacks virtue cannot adhere to the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s.a.w.). And he who fails to abide by the *Sunnah* cannot have respect for others.

Respect for God and His sanctuaries (*shaairullah*) is called *taqwa* (fear of God). He who has no respect for God and His sanctuaries is not a Sufi. Respect for God and His *shaair* cannot be given up even during the state of spiritual intoxication. Thus, *adab* (good manners) become a part and parcel of human life like habit. And habit becomes nature by constant observance. This shows that the friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) never give up *adab* (rules) whether they are in a state of intoxication or sobriety. I will now explain the rules of spiritual discipline.

The rules of spiritual discipline are of three kinds. First, there are the rules regarding unity of God (*tauhid*). According to these rules, one has to be thoroughly respectful to God in public and in private. One should behave as if one is in the presence of a king. It is related in an authentic saying (Hadith) of the Prophet (s.a.w.) that once he was sitting with his legs stretched out. At once the angel Jibrail came and said, "Allah says, 'O Muhammad sit as a servant sits in his master's presence.' " Harith al-Muhasibi is reported never to have leaned against a wall and never to have sat except with folded knees for forty years. When asked why had he subjected himself to that rigour, he said, "I am ashamed to sit in *muraqabah* in any position except that of a slave."

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi saw a man in a village in Khurasan, who was called Adib Kamandi. He never sat on the ground, except in prayers, for twenty five years. When I asked him to state the reason, he said that he had not yet attained the position worthy of sitting in *muraqabah* of God. Abu Yazid was asked how he received that high spiritual position. He said, "By good Companionship with God." That is to say, his behaviour in public and private was alike.

People should learn manners from Zulaikha who covered the face of her idol when she was alone with Yusuf. When Yusuf asked her to state the reason she said, "I do not want my deity to witness the scene of impropriety. It is against good manners." But when Yusuf had met his father, and Zulaikha had embraced Islam and was properly married to him, she was hesitant to go in privacy with Yusuf. At this Yusuf said, "What is the matter with you? Don't you love me?" She said, "I love you now even more, but you see, when I was an idol worshipper I did not like to be in privacy with you in front of my deity, who could not see, but now that I am a Muslim and my God can see what we do. I do not know how I should conceal my act of impropriety from Him." When the Prophet (s.a.w.) went up to meet God Almighty during the Night of Ascension, he refrained from looking around and fixed his gaze on God. God has described the event thus: "His eyes did neither swerve nor stray." [53:17]. That is to say neither the scenes of this world nor those of the next could attract his attention.

The second kind of *adab* is a sort of self-discipline by which you should impose on yourself the duties of behaving with the people properly, refraining from stimulation and disstimulation, eating less to avoid going to the lavatory frequently, and avoid seeing your own nakedness. It is stated that Hadhrat Ali never beheld his own nakedness because he did not like to see in himself what he did not like to see in others.

The third kind of *adab* is to behave properly with his fellow creatures. The best thing in this connection is to follow the *Sunnah* of the Prophet, peace be upon him.

Section

On Details of Etiquettes

God Almighty has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"Verily, Allah creates love in the hearts of the people for those who believe and do good deeds." [19:96]

That is to say when the believers behave properly with the people, and serve them, God creates love in their hearts for the believers. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "There are three ways by which you can be loved by others. Firstly, you should be the first in exchanging salutations (*salaam*). Secondly, you should make room for them while sitting in the gatherings. Thirdly, you should address them by the names they like best." God says:

"All Muslims are like brothers. Try to bring about reconciliation between them, (so that there is no friction between them.)" [49:10]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Try to make friends with as many persons as possible because Allah is modest and kind. He will not like to punish you in front of so many people on the Day of Judgement." But, mind you, this friendship should be for God's sake and not for the sake of material benefits or personal ego (*nafs*).

Malik bin Dinar said to his son-in-law Mughira, "Give-up friendship with brothers and friends if this friendship is devoid of spiritual objectives." That is to say, make friends either with those who are elder or younger to you, because if he is older than you, he will help you spiritually, if he is younger than you, he will receive help from you.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "The whole of piety is this, that you teach those who do not know."

Yahya bin Muadh has said: "Bad friends are of three categories. Firstly, those whom you have to ask to pray for you because a true friend need not be asked to pray. He is supposed to pray for you automatically. Secondly, those who are always formal (i.e. not candid). Thirdly, those whom you have to ask for forgiveness for some mistake since apologies are done by strangers and not by friends."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Man follows the religion of his friend. Take care, therefore, to see whom you make friends with." This is because the company of the good

people will make you good even if you are bad, and the company of bad people will make you bad even if you are good.

It is stated that once a man was praying like this during his *tawaf* of the Ka'bah, "O God, make my brethren good." When asked why did he not pray for himself, he said, "I have some brethren at home. If they are good, they will make me good. If they are bad they will make me bad." The fact of the matter is that everybody is happy to be with friends, so he is bound to imitate the friends with whom he lives day and night. If the friends are good, he will imitate their good habits. If they are bad, he is bound to imitate their bad habits. If you live in the company of a religious person, he will make you religious. We see that even the horses adopt the habits of their masters. The Sufi shaikhs, therefore, are very keen to live in the company of good people and teach their disciples also to follow suit, so much so that the subject of Companionship has assumed for them the importance of a religious obligation. Therefore, they have compiled many books on this subject. For instance, Junaid wrote a book on the rules of Companionship called *Tashih-al Iradat*; Ahmad Khadhroya Balkhi has a written a book called *Al-Riatul Haquq Allah*; Mohammed bin Ali-Tirmidhi wrote a book on the same subject called *Adabul Murideen* ; similarly Abul Qasim al-Hakim, Abu Bakr al-Warraq, Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari, Abu Abdur Rahman al-Sulami and Master Abul Qasim Qushairi have also written books on this subject. All these writers are great authorities on Sufism, but the book I desire to write will be a comprehensive book so that the need to look for other books is obviated.

Section

It has been explained above that Companionship is necessary and solitude is dangerous for the *murids*. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Satan is with the solitary, and farther from the two." God has said:

"There is no discourse between the three, but God is the fourth." [58:8]

One of the disciples of Junaid had the misunderstanding that he had attained perfection; he therefore left and retired into solitude. Every night a camel was brought to him to take him to a place which they claimed was paradise, where he was served with exquisite meals of all kinds. The whole place was decorated beautifully with gardens and canals. The man used to sleep there for the rest of the night and when he opened his eyes in the next morning he found himself in his home. When he mentioned it to Junaid, he said, "Alright, when you go there next time, you should recite thrice, '*La hawla wala quwwata illa billah....*' (There is no power and strength but in God....)" When he was taken to that place the next night, he recited it thrice. As soon as he did this, the whole crowd shrieked and disappeared; and on looking around, he saw filth and bones of animals scattered all over the place. He realised his mistake, prayed to God for forgiveness and went back to Junaid's company. It shows solitude is fraught with so many dangers for the novice.

It is one of the etiquettes of Companionship that every person should be shown respect in accordance with his status. They treat the elders with respect like fathers and brothers, and treat the younger ones with affection. They refrain from jealousy, arrogance, vengeance, backbiting and dishonesty and give sincere advice to everyone. Since the purpose underlying Companionship is to seek God's pleasure, they try not to insult or do harm to anyone by their words and deeds. Once I asked Hadhrat Abul Qasim Gorgani about the obligations of Companionship. He said, "One of the most important conditions of Companionship is that you should refrain from selfishness which is the root of all vices. Solitude is better than selfishness. When you seek self-interest, you are faced with calamities."

A Sufi shaikh says, "Once I went from Kufah to Makkah and requested Shaikh Ibrahim Khawas to allow me to accompany him. He said, 'In the journey it is necessary to appoint a leader to be obeyed by everyone. Do you want to be the leader or follower.' I said, 'I would like to be a follower.' He said, 'From now on you have to do what I say.' I agreed. When we arrived at a *manzil* (halting place), he told me to sit down, and he himself went and fetched fuel wood, burnt the fire and told me to warm myself since it was cold. Then he went and drew water from a well. When I offered to do anything he reminded me of the pledge and bade me to sit still. When the night fell it started raining heavily. He took off his patched frock (*muraqqah*) and held it over me all the night. I felt very much ashamed, but kept quiet on account of the conditions imposed on me. In the morning I said to him, 'O Shaikh, it is now my turn to be the leader.' He said, 'Very well.' When we reached the next halting place, I asked him to sit down while I would do the service. But he did not agree and went about collecting wood. When I said I was the leader and he had to obey my command, he dismissed my protests saying, 'The best form of obedience is to serve the leader.' He continued to behave like this till we reached Makkah. But I was so ashamed that I had to leave his company. He came across me at Mina and said, 'O my son when you are in the company of dervishes, you should behave the way I did.' "

Anas bin Malik says: "I served the Prophet for ten years, but never found him angry or displeased." That is to say he never said, "Why did you do this and why did you not do that."

Dervishes are of two kinds: Residents (*muqim*) and travellers (*musafir*). It is customary with the Sufi shaikhs to regard the resident dervishes as superior to the travellers because the former are steadfast in service of God, while the latter go about in pursuit of their own interests. Moreover, there is another sign of the superiority of the resident to the travelling dervishes in that while the latter are the people of search (*talab*), the former are the people of attainment (*yaft*). However, the resident dervishes should regard travelling ones as superior to themselves, because they are engaged in worldly affairs, while travelling dervishes are free from them. Similarly, old dervishes should regard younger dervishes as superior to themselves because their sins are less numerous; and young men should give preference to the old ones who have more deeds

of worship on their record. This sort of behaviour on everybody's part is sure to emancipate them.

Section

Generally speaking, the word *adib* means a literary person. But in Sufi terminology, it means one in possession of virtuous qualities. Once a shaikh was asked, "What is *adab*?" He replied, "*Adab* is this, that when you speak, you speak the truth. When you act, your actions are based on justice. When you are silent, your silence should be full of wisdom (*hikmat*)."

Abu Nasar Sarraj has said in *Kitab-ul-Luma*, "From the viewpoint of *adab*, there are three kinds of mankind. Firstly, the worldly people according to whom *adab* means literary pursuits, learning and knowledge, eloquence, rhetoric, and knowledge of the etiquette of visiting kings, etc. Secondly, the religious people, whose main concern is obedience to the laws of *shariat* and purification of the soul. Thirdly, the elite, the Sufis whose aim is to gain spiritual perfection through purification, acts of worship and constant devotion.

Section

Rules of Companionship Concerning the Residents

It is one of the etiquettes of the shaikhs that when someone comes to them, they should receive him joyfully, respect him and treat him as a guest of honour, and regard him as the guest of Prophet Ibrahim, that is to say, the angels who came to visit him. They should not enquire whence he comes and whither he goes, or what is his name. He should be considered to have come from God and is going to God, and that his name is "servant of God" (*banda-i-haq*). Then they must see whether he desires to be alone or in company. If he likes to be alone, he should be left alone, otherwise he should be given a place in their own company and should be treated well. When he likes to go to bed, the resident dervish should press his legs. If the traveller does not like it, he should say he is not accustomed to it, then the resident should not insist, so that he is not annoyed. The next morning, he should be offered a bath during which his back, knees and feet should be cleansed. The resident dervish should provide a new dress to the guest if he can afford it, otherwise his clothes should be washed to be worn when he comes out of the bath. He should be asked to stay for a few days. If he likes, he may be introduced to any saint or scholar in the town. If he does not like it he should not be bothered, because sometimes a dervish is in a mood to be alone with God. It is stated that when Khidhr wanted to meet Ibrahim Khawas, the latter refused it because he did not want anybody except God to be with him. It is not good on the part of the

resident dervish to take the guest to the worldly people, or force him to take part in a funeral against his will. The guest should not be subjected to humiliation by taking him to the rich people to receive charity.

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi never suffered any inconvenience more than the one when I was a guest of an absurd man who took me from his house to such and such *amir* (rich) to such and such *zamindar* against my will.

It is on this account that I vowed never to treat my guests like that. However, the only advantage which one can have from an uncongenial person, is that one should avoid imitating him and must develop the habit to tolerate his absurdities. If any travelling dervish wants to stay longer or wishes some worldly benefits, nothing should be denied to him provided he is not a greedy person or an impostor. Such a person should go to the bazaar and beg or work to earn livelihood. He has no right to go to the dervishes and bother them. Once Junaid and his disciples were busy doing *dhikr* when a dervish arrived. They gave whatsoever food was available, but he said he wanted this thing and that thing. Upon this Junaid said, "You must go to the bazaar for you are a man of the bazaar and not of the mosque or monastery (*khanqah*)."

Once I went to Damascus to visit Shaikh ibn Mualla with two dervishes. On the way we decided that everyone of us should keep in his mind his problems to enable the shaikh to read our minds and solve them. I said to myself, "I wish the shaikh recites a few verses in praise of Hussain bin Mansur Hallaj." One of my companions said, "I wish my spleen is cured." The other said, "I wish the shaikh gives us *halwa sabuni* (sweets)." When we reached there, the shaikh gave me a piece of paper on which he had written down the verses I desired. Then he touched my friend's spleen and he was cured. To the man who wanted *halwa*, he said, "*Halwa sabuni* is the food of the vulgar, but you are dressed like a dervish. So either eat *halwa* or be a dervish." It shows it is not necessary for a resident dervish to meet such desires of a travelling dervish as are against the etiquettes of sainthood, because the dervishes have to guide and not misguide one another. He who wants to appease his *nafs* (lower self) should be ignored while he who opposes his *nafs* should be helped.

It is related in a Hadith that the Prophet (s.a.w.) made a brotherhood between Salman Farsi and Abu Dharr Ghaffari, both of whom belonged to *Ahli Suffah* (Companions of the Bench). Once when Salman went to visit his brother-in-Islam, Abu Dharr, the latter's wife complained to him that her husband neither eats by day, nor sleeps by night. Salman asked her to bring food, and said to Abu Dharr, "O brother I want you to eat it, since your fast is of voluntary (*nafil*) and not of obligatory (*fardh*) nature." He complied with his wish. When night fell, Salman said to him, "O brother, I wish thee to sleep since both thy body and thy wife and thy Lord have a claim over thee." Next day, Abu Dharr went to the Prophet (s.a.w.) who said, "I say the same thing as Salman said to you yesterday: Verily, thy body has a claim over thee." This shows how Salman advised his brother Abu Dharr to do what he had renounced as selfish pleasure.

Once in Iraq I was in a mood to renounce this world completely and I was giving away freely what I had so that I ran into debt. I was very much troubled by the people who would come at any time and ask for help. A shaikh wrote to me saying, "My son, beware lest you ignore God to serve those who are ignoring Him. If, however, there is a lover of God, do everything to serve him. The servants of God should do nothing which distract them from Him."

Section

Regarding Rules for the Travelling Dervishes

When a dervish wishes to travel, his first and foremost duty is to see that he travels for God's sake and not to appease his *nafs*. That is to say he should journey inwardly to God as he journeys outwardly from home. Secondly, he must always be with *wudhu* (ablution) and should not neglect his spiritual exercises. Thirdly, his object should always be either pilgrimage or holy war (*jihad*), or to visit holy places or holy persons, or to seek knowledge. Otherwise, his journey will be useless. Fourthly, he should take with him his patched garment to cover his body, prayer rug to say his prayers on, bucket and rope to draw water and a staff to protect himself. He may also take a comb, needle and thread, and also antimony. If, however, he wants to take things other than those mentioned above, then he has to see what his spiritual station (*maqam*) is. If he is in the middle of the spiritual journey, everything he carries is an idol which veils him from God. But if he has reached the stage of *tamkin* (adept) he can carry what he likes.

Shaikh Abu Muslim Faris bin Thalib-al-Farsi says: "Once I went to visit Shaikh Abu Saeed Abul Khair bin Muhammad and found him sleeping on a couch with four pillows, with one leg put across the other and dressed in fine Egyptian linen. Conversely, my dress was extremely dirty, looking like leather, and my body was lean on account of austerities. Seeing him in that rich environment I said to myself, 'We are both dervishes, yet he is rolling in wealth and I am in this abject poverty.' He immediately divined my thoughts and vanity and said, 'O Abu Muslim, in which book have you read that a self-conceited man is a dervish? Since I see God in everything, He has given me the throne to sit on; and since you see yourself in everything, God keeps you in affliction. My lot is *mushahidah*, and yours is *mujahidah*. These are two stations in the journey to God, but God is far above them, and a dervish is above all states and stations.' On hearing this my senses forsook me, and the whole world was dark in my eyes. When I came to myself, I apologised to him and he accepted it. After that I said, 'Sir, I beg leave to depart, for I cannot bear sitting with you.' He said, 'You are right' and recited the following: 'What my ears could not hear, my eyes witnessed in clarity.'"

So the travelling dervish must always act upon the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and when he comes to the resident dervish he should greet him respectfully. While entering

his room he should take off his left shoe first, but should step in with his right foot strictly in accordance with the Prophet's *Sunnah*. But when he makes *wudhu* (ablution), he should wash the right foot first. After *wudhu* he should say two raka'ats (bowings) as "*tahyatul-wudhu*" which is also *Sunnah*. He then should meet the resident dervish in humility and respect, but should never criticise the shaikh or anyone else there, nor talk about the hardships of the journey, or tell stories, or show off his knowledge, for all these are the signs of conceit. If someone misbehaves with him, he should bear it patiently for God's sake, because in patience there are blessings. If the resident or any of his servants invites him to go and visit some place or person, he should not object to it even if he dislikes it. If someone misbehaves he should forgive him. He should see that he does not become a burden to anyone, nor should he make an unreasonable demand, or ask the host to take him to see any prince or dignitaries. In short, both the residents and travellers should try to seek God's pleasure, and to be courteous to one another; nor should they talk ill of anyone as it is bad manners on the part of a seeker of God to backbite anyone, since according to Sufism whatever is done in the world is done by the Will of God, and to find fault with anyone is tantamount to finding fault with God.

Commentary: This statement on the part of our author also throws light on the question of predestination and free will which has been discussed at many places in this book.

Section

Manners of Eating

It must be remembered that although man cannot give up eating as it is necessary for the maintenance of the body, yet he should avoid excessive eating. Imam Shafiyi says: "He who is concerned only with what is stuffed in the belly his worth is what comes out of it." Nothing is more dangerous to a spiritual seeker than eating too much. The advantages of hunger have already been explained at length in the relevant chapter.

Once Abu Yazid Bistami was asked, "Why do you praise hunger so much." He said, "This is because if Pharaoh (*Firaon*) had been hungry, he would never had said, 'I am God'; if Qarun (*Korah*) had been hungry, he would not have been rebellious to God; *Thalabiah* was praised by all so long as he remained hungry, but went astray when he started eating too much."

God has said about the infidels: "Leave them alone. Let them eat and drink. They will know what they had been doing." He has also said: "The infidels are happy with the world and eat like animals. Their ultimate residence is hell."

Sahl bin Abdullah has said: "I think the belly full of wine is better than the one full of lawful food." On being asked to elaborate he said, "When man's belly is filled with wine, he loses his head and his lust vanishes and people are secure from his hands; but when his belly is full of food his lust rises to its peak, and his ego goes out of control."

The Sufi shaikhs have said: "The Sufi should eat like a sick man, sleep like a ship-wrecked man, and speak like a mother whose child has died."

It is one of the etiquettes of eating that a Sufi should not eat alone but should share meals with others. While eating together they should make sacrifice for other's sake. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "The worst person is he who eats alone, beats his servants and refuses to hear a messenger."

When he starts eating he should recite *Bismillah* (God's name) first. He should refrain from handling the dish in such a manner which causes offence to his companions. He should begin with the savoury dishes first, and should do justice to his companions. Sahl bin Abdullah was asked to state the meanings of the verse: "God enjoins *adl* (justice) and *ihsan* (beneficence)." He said, "Justice means giving preference to your companions in eating; and *ihsan* means deeming him to have a better claim to that morsel than yourself."

My shaikh used to say: "I wonder at the pretender who professes to have renounced the world, but is madly after a morsel of food." One of the etiquettes of eating is that he should eat with the right hand and should not look at the morsels of others. He should not drink water except when he is very thirsty. He should not take large morsels, should chew his food well and avoid haste as it causes indigestion and is also against the *Sunnah* of the Prophet (s.a.w.). After finishing the meal, he should thank God and wash his hands. It is a breach of Companionship for a section of the party to go out for dining without informing the rest of the comrades. But if the party agrees to send out a few persons to dine, it is considered lawful by the shaikhs. But the most important principle in this respect is that invitation of the poor should not be refused and that of the rich should not be accepted, nor should the Sufis go to the rich man's house or beg anything from him as it is highly unbecoming on their part to take anything from one who is not one of them (*mahram*). It must be remembered in this connection that a man is not worldly by virtue of abundance of property, nor can he be called a dervish by virtue of possessing nothing. A worldly person (*dunyadar*) is he who despises dervishes even if he is a poor man. And a dervish is he who regards dervishhood better than richness even when he is a King.

Yet another etiquette of eating is that he should not say, "I like this and do not like that" and that he should see that the host does not get offended. If the host is friendly, the guest can go in the interior of the house. If not, he should stay outside. But the guest should never take food to his house. It is highly objectionable.

Section

On Mashaikh's Manners of Walking

God has said: "The servants of God the Merciful, are those who walk on the earth meekly." [25:64]

The spiritual seeker should know whether the steps he takes are for God or against Him. If it is for God, he should persevere in it. If it is not, he should beg Him for pardon. Once Daud Tai took some medicine and was advised to walk a few steps to make it work, but he refused to do it saying, "I am of God, who may ask me on the Day of Judgement as to why I walked a few steps for selfish ends."

God has said: "And their feet will bear witness to what they committed." [36:65]

A dervish should therefore, be in the state of *muraqabah* (meditation) when he walks, and should refrain from looking around. When he comes across someone, he should not move away to save his dress since all human beings are brethren. Moreover, it breeds conceit. However, if someone is manifestly filthy he should be avoided without letting him know about it. If the dervish is walking in a group of people, he should not try to go in front of them since it is a sign of pride; nor should he lag too far behind in humility because it is also ostentation which amounts to pride. He should also save his shoes and feet from filth on the way, so that God saves his inside from contamination. When he is going with a number of persons, he should not stop on the way to talk to any person, to save the others from inconvenience. While walking, he should neither go too fast to look covetous, nor too slow to resemble the arrogant. And every step he takes should be of full length, for taking short steps is a sign of fickle-mindedness.

In essence, the walking of the lover of God should always be for God's sake, so that if anyone says "Where are you going?" He should reply in the words of the Qur'an, "Verily I am going to my Lord who will guide me rightly." Otherwise his walking is nuisance (*wabal*), because steps in the right direction are the result of right thoughts. If his mind is concentrated on God, his feet will fall in the right direction.

Abu Yazid Bistami has said: "If a dervish walks without *muraqabah* (meditation) he is heedless (*ghafil*). The destination can be reached in two steps: one step away from *nafs* (selfhood) and the other firm on God's commands." That is to say, in one step he should go away from himself (ego) and in another he should reach God. It must be remembered that there is no need to traverse physical distance to reach God. The journey to God is spiritual and can be completed by sitting in *muraqabah* (meditation).

Commentary: What the writer means is that since God is in man as stated in the following verse of the Holy Qur'an: "We are nearer unto him than his jugular vein," [50:16], the journey to God is not of a physical nature. It is of spiritual nature. When we talk about Divine Nearness, it means nearness of the human soul to Divine Being or Divine Essence. It is a kind of subtle union which cannot be explained by human language.

Section

Etiquettes of Sleeping in Travel and at Home

This is a controversial issue among the Sufi shaikhs. Some are of the opinion that the seeker must not sleep unless when he is overpowered by slumber, since the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Sleep is the sister of death."

Since life is the gift of God and death is dreadful, naturally wakefulness is superior to sleep. Shibli says: "God informed me that he who sleeps is heedless (*ghafil*) and he who is heedless is veiled."

On the other hand, some shaikhs maintain that the seeker is at liberty to sleep when he feels like, that is to say when he has done his spiritual work he can go to sleep. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "The angels do not record the deeds of three persons: He who is sleeping until he wakes up; he who is not of age until he becomes of age; he who is mad until he regains his senses."

This is because when a man is sleeping, people are secure from his mischief; his hands are unable to do anything; his tongue cannot tell a lie; his limbs cannot commit a sin. Therefore, the angels do not write anything. Ibn Abbas has said: "There is nothing more grievous to Iblis than a sinner in sleep, for he is waiting to see when he wakes up and commits sins."

This was the subject of controversy between Junaid and Ali bin Sahl Asfahani who wrote several exquisite letters telling him to the effect that sleep was heedlessness, and was a state of being veiled from the Beloved. Not only that, he is also heedless of his own benefits and losses. God said to Daud (David): "He who pretends to love Me and sleeps in the night is a liar."

Junaid said in reply to that letter: "Wakefulness is our act of devotion to God, while our sleep is God's act for us. Therefore what proceeds from God without our will is better for us than what proceeds from us with our will. Sleep is a gift of God for his lovers."

In fact, the whole thing depends on the doctrine of intoxication and sobriety which has been discussed at length earlier. It is surprising to see that Junaid, who is an advocate of sobriety, is speaking in favour of intoxication here. It appears he was overpowered by a fit of intoxication temporarily; or it may be that according to him, sleep is sobriety and wakefulness is intoxication because sleep is a human attribute and so long as man is in sleep he is sober. And wakefulness is the attribute of God, and when a man transcends his own attribute and is qualified with Divine attributes, he may be supposed to have been intoxicated. I have met several shaikhs who agree with Junaid in preferring sleep to wakefulness because the visions of most of the shaikhs and prophets take place during sleep. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Verily God takes pride in the servant who sleeps while he is in *sajdah*, and says to the angles, 'Look at my servant whose spirit is in secret conversation with Me, while his body is on the prayer mat'."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said: "He who sleeps with *wudhu* (ablution), his soul is permitted to do *tawaf* around His *arsh* (throne) and do *sajdah* to God." I have read in a book that Shah Shuja Kirmani kept awake for forty years. One night he fell asleep and was blessed with the vision of God. After that he used to sleep in the hope of seeing Him again.

Qais Amri (Majnun) says: "Dear beloved, I can't go to sleep due to the fire of love. But I do try to sleep in the hope of seeing Thee." I have seen many shaikhs who give preference to wakefulness over sleep like Ali bin Sahl, because the prophets received *wahy* (revelations) and the *auliya* perform supernatural deeds while they are awake. A Sufi shaikh has said: "If sleep were good, there would be sleep in paradise." That is to say if there was any good in sleep, or if love and nearness of God was possible through sleep, it would follow that there would be sleep in paradise. But since there is neither sleep nor veil in paradise, it means sleep is a veil. A shaikh has said when Adam went to sleep, Hawwa (Eve) came out of his left side, and became the cause of all sufferings. The Sufi shaikhs also say that when Prophet Ibrahim slept, he was commanded by God to sacrifice his son. When he mentioned it to his son Ismail, he said: "Father, your sleep was the result of heedlessness. Had you not slept you would not have been commanded to kill your son."

It is related that Shibli used to keep salt water and a needle with him in the night. Whenever he was overpowered by sleep he would dip the needle in that water and move it in his eyes. I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi have seen a Sufi shaikh who used to go to sleep after obligatory prayer (*fardh*) in the night. I met shaikh Ahmad of Samarqand who had not slept for forty years except for a short while during daytime.

This question depends on one's views on life and death. Those who prefer death to life always prefer sleep to wakefulness, and those who prefer life to death invariably prefer wakefulness to sleep. Actually it is not meritorious to force yourself to keep awake. Merit is that you keep awake without effort. The Prophet (s.a.w.) who was the best of all men and whom God chose and raised to the highest position, did neither force himself to keep

awake nor to sleep. God commanded him to: "Rise and pray during night, half thereof or less." [73:2-3]. Similarly, it is not meritorious to force yourself to sleep. The best thing is to sleep without effort. The Men of the Cave (in *Surah al-Kahfi*) neither forced themselves to sleep nor to keep awake. It was God who made them go to sleep and elevated them without any effort on their part.

In short, when a man reaches such a stage of spiritual progress as he turns his back to everything other than God, loses his will and submits to the Will of God, it matters little whether he sleeps or keeps awake. In either case he is blessed and honoured. So when he sleeps, he should think that this is the last sleep of his life (meaning thereby that death is near). He should repent for all of his sins, see that nothing remains due to his friends and foes; then he should make *wudhu* (ablution) and pay all his debts. Having satisfied all demands, he should sleep on the right side facing the *qiblat*, and thank God for having been blessed with Islam, and make a vow that if he gets up again he will not commit sin. He who has set everything in order like this in wakefulness has no fear of sleep or death.

It is related that a shaikh used to visit an *imam* of a mosque who was engrossed in the world and vainglories, and would say to the *imam*, "O such and such, you should die." This offended the *imam*, and he said to himself, "Why should this beggar insult me like this." He, therefore decided that when the shaikh came again he would tell him to die instead. Next day when the shaikh came, and repeated the same words, the *imam* said, "Die yourself." On this, the shaikh spread his prayer mat, put his head on it and said, "I am dead" and was really dead. The *imam* took warning and started reforming himself.

My shaikh used to tell his *murids* not to sleep unless overpowered by slumber, and once they had awakened not to fall asleep again since going to sleep again is unworthy of the seekers of God and despised in Sufism.

Section

On Rules Regarding Speech and Silence.

God has said in the Holy Qur'an:

"What word is better than calling mankind to His court and doing good deeds."

This shows that man must do good deeds and invite mankind to obey God, and praise Him. The power of speech is a great blessing of God for man. It is by this quality that man is distinguished from animals. God has said:

"We have honoured the sons of Adam...." [17:72]

Some interpreters think this refers to the power of speech. However, like its merits, speech has its demerits as well. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "The worst I fear for my people is the tongue." In short, speech is like wine which intoxicates the mind and one who gets a taste of it cannot leave it. Therefore, the Sufis abstain from talking more than is necessary, and keep a close watch over their tongue from the beginning to the end. They speak only when it is for God's sake, otherwise they keep silent. They firmly believe that God knows their secret thoughts. God says in the Holy Qur'an:

"Do they think We are not aware of what they think and discuss. We are aware of it and Our angels take it down." [43:80]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "He who keeps silence is saved." In silence there are many advantages and blessing; while in speech there are many evils. Some shaikhs prefer silence to speech, while others prefer speech to silence.

Junaid has said: "Words and expressions are pretensions. What matters is the meaning." But when one does not think it proper to speak due to fear or expediency, it does not violate the principle of gnosis (*ma'rifat*), that is gnosis is not impaired by it. However, when the speech has no reality, it is better not to speak, for speech in that case will be hypocrisy. Pretension without reality is hypocrisy and reality without pretension is sincerity (*ikhlas*). Someone has beautifully said: "He who depends on pretensions, speech does not benefit him. He who is in the state of *mushahidah*, needs no speech."

This supports Junaid's saying; "He who knows God, is dumb." That is to say, he who is blessed with God's vision (*mushahidah*) keeps silent, for in actual vision (*iyan*), expression (*bayan*) becomes a veil.

Once Shibli was overpowered by ecstasy in a meeting with his master Junaid and said pointing to God in the upper direction, "*Ya muradi*" (O, the object of my desire). Junaid said, "O Abu Bakr, if God is the object of your desire, what is the use of pointing to Him, for He is not confined to any direction. If He is not the object of your desire, you did the wrong thing." Shibli asked for God's forgiveness.

The class of Sufi shaikhs who prefer speech to silence, maintain that it is necessary in Islam to proclaim what you profess. If a gnostic (*arif*) has known God for a thousand years but does not express it, he is virtually an infidel, since God has enjoined Muslims everywhere in the Qur'an to express with the tongue what you feel in the heart. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has been commanded by God to, "proclaim the bounties of God" in thanksgiving.

What is proclaiming and thanking God if it is not speech. Our speech is the means of expressing gratitude for God's bounties. God has said: "Pray to me and I will accept your prayers." He has also said: "I respond to what anyone says." [2:186]

A shaikh has said: "He who does not declare his spiritual state is without a spiritual state itself." He has also said: "My spiritual state is more eloquent than my tongue and my silence is a good interpretation of my question."

Once Abu Bakr Shibli was walking in Khirkh, a quarter of Baghdad city. He heard an impostor saying, "Silence is better than speech." Shibli said: "Thy silence is better than thy speech; but my speech is better than my silence, because thy speech is vanity and thy silence is absurd, while my silence is patience and my speech is gnosis."

And I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi assert that there are two kinds of speech and two kinds of silence. Speech can be truth or falsehood. Similarly, silence is either the result of absorption in *mushahidah* (vision of God) or forgetfulness. If speech is truth, it is better than silence. If it is falsehood, silence is better than speech. The imposters claim that speech is better than silence; and the ignorant who cannot differentiate between a pillar and a wall assert that silence is better than speech.

The Sufi shaikhs have said, "When one speaks, he is either right or wrong, but he who is made by God to speak remains immune from going astray." Iblis spoke from vanity when he said, "I am better than Adam." [38:67]. But God made Adam say: "O our Lord, we are guilty of doing wrong; so if you do not forgive and have mercy on us, we shall be ruined." [7:23]. It shows when the Sufi shaikhs speak, they are made by God to speak, and when they are silent, they do so because of modesty and helplessness (*majburi*).

Someone has beautifully said "He whose silence is because of modesty, his speech is full of life." This is because their speech is the result of *mushahidah*. Speech without *mushahidah* is useless. When they are with themselves, they love silence, but when they are with God, the people love to write their speech on their heart. A Sufi shaikh has said: "He whose silence is gold, his speech is alchemy." That is to say, his speech makes gold of dust. Therefore, the seeker who is absorbed in God must keep silent so that the Divine tongue speaks out and captivates the hearts of listeners.

Therefore, the etiquettes of speech are that a dervish does not speak without God's permission and when he speaks, his speech should not be anything but truth. And the etiquettes of silence are that he should neither be ignorant nor contented with ignorance. It is necessary for the seeker not to criticise what his shaikh says nor should he misinterpret it. He should never tell a lie or backbite or offend anyone with the tongue with which he has recited *kalimah-i-shahadat* and proclaimed God's unity. He should not address the dervishes by name, nor should he speak before he is asked any question. It does not become a dervish to speak first or to remain silent when someone speaks falsehood.

Section

On the Etiquettes of Asking (*Sawal*)

God has praised in the Holy Qur'an those who, "Do not cause nuisance while asking." [2:274]. He has also said: "Do not drive away the beggar." [93:10]. As far a possible, one must beg of God only, and not other than God, because begging means turning away from God, and when one turns his face away from God, God may turn His face away from him.

Once a worldly person said to Rabia Basri, "O Rabia, ask for anything and I will give it to you." She said, "Dear sir, I am ashamed to ask anything of God, how can I ask anything of a fellow creature."

It is related that once in the reign of Abu Muslim an innocent dervish was arrested and put in prison. In the night, Abu Muslim had a dream in which the Holy Prophet (s.a.w.) came to him and said, "God has sent me to tell you that one of His friends is in your prison. Get up and release him." Abu Muslim jumped up from his bed and ran to the prison bare-headed and bare-footed, and flung the gates open. When the dervish came out, Abu Muslim said, "Forgive me for the mistake and if you are in need of anything in future, do let me know." The dervish said, "O prince, when I have a Master who bade you at midnight to release me, how can I ask anyone other than Him for help?" Abu Muslim burst into tears and the dervish walked away.

Some shaikhs, however, think there is no harm in asking because God has praised "Those who do not become a nuisance while asking." It means they are allowed to ask for help without becoming a nuisance. The Prophet (s.a.w.) used to ask for help for his companions and has enjoined us to, "seek help from the good-hearted." Consequently, the Sufi shaikhs consider it permissible to seek help in the following three cases:

Firstly, with the intention to be relieved of worrying about two loaves of bread all the time and thereby failing to concentrate on God. It is said that once, a *murid* of Shaqiq Balkhi met Abu Yazid Bistami who asked him about his shaikh. The *murid* said that his shaikh was so firm in *tawakkal* (trust in God) that if the earth turned into stone and did not grow anything and the skies turned into iron and not a drop of rain fell, his *tawakkal* would not shatter. Abu Yazid said, "When you meet him, tell him not to test God with two loaves. If he feels hungry he should beg of his neighbour a piece of bread and remember God with perfect ease, so that the city does not get destroyed due to his sin."

Commentary: Abu Yazid was a perfect spiritual doctor and came to know that while abstaining from asking other than God for food, he (Shaqiq Balkhi) was unconsciously nourishing his ego and that is why Abu Yazid advised him to beg food from his neighbour to crush his ego. It is said that when the message was delivered to Shaqiq, he fell senseless for three days.

Secondly, it is permissible to beg with the object of humiliating one's self and crushing the ego. When Shibli came to Junaid for the first time, Shaikh Junaid said "Shibli, you are proud of being the son of the governor of Samra province. Your cure lies in going to the market daily and begging of everyone you meet, so that you know your real worth." Shibli obeyed and begged for three years, and the alms started decreasing every day till a day came when nobody gave him anything. He went back and reported the matter to the shaikh who said, "Abu Bakr you have now realised how wretched you are in the eyes of the people, now go and worship God without building hopes on anyone other than God." The shaikh ordered him to beg not for material good; for the purpose of education. It is said that Dhunnun Misri had a friend who died. Once, Dhunnun saw him in a dream and asked him how God had dealt with him. The friend replied that God had forgiven him saying, "You have suffered patiently by begging of the wretched folks, therefore I forgive you."

The third reason for begging is for reverence of God. The Sufi shaikhs believe that everything in the world belongs to God and those who possess wealth are nothing but keepers or custodians; and, therefore, it is perfectly justifiable to ask the custodians because in asking the custodians, one is really asking the Master.

And he who asks of the custodian is more reverent to God than he who asks of God Himself. I have read in a book that once the daughter of Yahya bin Muadh asked her mother to give her something. The mother said, "Ask God to give it to you." The daughter said, "Mother, I am ashamed of asking anything of God to appease my *nafs*. What you possess also belongs to God."

Rules of begging are as follows: If you get nothing, you should be more cheerful than if you get something. You should not beg of women and wretched people. Make sure that the money with them is lawful. You should avoid begging to live in comfort or to decorate your house, or to save anything for the next day, otherwise you may be doomed till eternity. You should not make God as a means to earn money; nor should you display your piety to earn more.

Once a dervish came back from the desert into a city. He had a sparrow in his hand and would ask people to give something for the sparrow's sake. When asked why he did so,

he said, "It is better to beg for the sparrow's sake than for God's sake because God is too great to be slighted like that." I have a lot to say on this subject, but I leave it for the sake of brevity.

Section

Rules and Etiquettes Regarding the Sufi's Marriage (*Taswij*) and Celibacy (*Tajrid*)

God has said in the Holy Qur'an, "They (women) are the garment for you, and you are the garment for them." [2:183]

And the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "Marry and increase my *ummah* over all the *ummahs* on the day of Judgement."

He has also said, "The most blessed woman is she who spends the least, is the comeliest, and the most chaste."

It is evident from the authentic *ahadith* that marriage is permissible for all men and women, but it is obligatory for those who cannot resist lust; and it is a *Sunnah* (according to the Prophet's way) for those who can support a family.

Some Sufi shaikhs are of the view that the purpose of marriage is to repulse lust, and a means of earning (*kasb*), freeing the mind from anxiety. And some of them think that the purpose of marriage is to beget children. If the child dies before the father dies, the child will intercede for him. If the father dies first, the child will pray for him.

It is stated that when Hadhrat Umar asked Hadhrat Ali to give his daughter Ummi Kalthum binti Fatimah to him in marriage, Hadhrat Ali said she was too young for him, and that the Prophet (s.a.w.) was thinking of marrying her to his nephew Abdullah bin Ja'far. On this Umar said, "There are numerous women available to me for marriage, but my purpose in marrying you daughter is not to quell lust; it is to get related to the blessed family of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who has said, 'All relations come to an end on death except relationship with me which lasts forever.'" Umar continued, "Although I am already related to the Prophet spiritually, I wish I be related to him physically as well." Hadhrat Ali agreed to the proposal, and Ummi Kalthum was married and gave birth to Zaid bin Umar.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "There are four incentives for marriage: wealth, nobility, beauty and religion (*deen*). You should marry one who is religious, because after Islam, there is nothing so good as a pious and obedient wife who is the source of happiness to look at."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said: "Satan is with the solitary." This is because when a man or a woman lives alone, it is easier for Satan to misguide them. There is nothing so effective to control lust as marriage, provided both husband and wife love each other, for nothing is more grievous than an unhappy marriage. Therefore, first of all the dervish must think over the merits and demerits of marriage and celibacy and decide what would be best for him, for both of them have two evils. The evils of celibacy are neglect of the Prophet's *Sunnah* and fear of lust and ultimate debauchery. The evils of marriage are attachment with other than God, and satisfaction of sensual passions which can be avoided by living alone.

The golden rule in this respect is: If he is inclined to associate with mankind, he should choose solitary life. If he has the tendency to live in solitude, he should marry. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "Go ahead, for, the solitary ones have superseded you." Hussain bin Abu Hussain Basri has said: "Those of light burden will be saved and those of heavy burden will perish."

Ibrahim Khawas said, "Once I went to see a dervish in a village. When I entered his house, I found it nice and clean like a place of worship. I saw the shaikh sitting in one corner of the room and a woman in another corner. Both of them looked weak and exhausted through excessive devotion. They received me cheerfully and made me stay with them for three days. When I was about to depart, I asked the dervish how he was related to the woman. He said, 'I have two relationships with her. She is my cousin as well as my wife.' I said 'But what I have seen in these three days is that you have no relationship with her.' He replied, 'Yes, you are right. It is for the last sixty years that we are living like this. The thing is that we fell in love with each other when we were young, but her father did not agree to our marriage. We suffered the pangs of separation for a long time. When her father died, my father arranged the marriage. On the first night of wedding she said, "You know how kind God has been to us in bringing us together. Let us, therefore, refrain from sensual desire and worship God for the whole night in thanksgiving." I said, "Very well." The next night she expressed the same desire. On the third night I said, "We have worshipped God for two nights for your sake. Tonight, let us worship for my sake." It is now sixty-five years that we have not touched each other, but have spent our lives in worship.' "

It is incumbent on a dervish who wants to marry a woman, to provide lawful food for her, and pay her dowry out of lawful property, and abstain from sensual desires until all obligations and commands of God are fulfilled. After he has said his prayers, he should pray to God like this: "O my Lord, you have created the desire for sex in order that the world is populated and it is you who has bestowed upon me the blessing of marriage. My object in marriage is to be saved from sinning and to get a child who becomes your *wali* (friend) and *mahbub* (beloved), and not a child who becomes a veil between You and myself."

It is said that a son was born to Sahl bin Abdullah Tustari. Whenever the boy wanted his mother to give him food, she would say, "Ask God for it." When the boy was in prayer

she would secretly place food by his side. Thus, the boy became convinced that what he got was given by God. Once when he came back from school the mother was not at home, and he bowed down to God for food. When he raised his head he found what he had desired lying by his side. When his mother came back she said, "Where did you get the food from?" He said, "The place it always comes from."

Similarly, when Hadhrat Zakariya went to visit Hadhrat Maryam in winter he found the fruit of the summer season lying with her. He said, "Where did you get this from?" She said, "It is God's gift." [3:37]

But it does not mean that the dervish should pray to God for worldly wealth or unlawful (*haram*) gains and luxurious living, because a dervish is ruined by the destruction of the heart just as a rich man is ruined by the destruction of property. But while the rich man can make amends, the dervish cannot.

In modern times it is next to impossible to get a wife whose wants are not excessive and who avoids unreasonable demands. That is why some shaikhs practised celibacy not to burden themselves too much in accordance with the following Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.): "The best men in the later times would be those who have light backs." When asked what light backs meant, he said, "Those who have no wife and children." He has also said, "Go ahead, the solitary persons have superseded you."

In short, all the Sufi shaikhs are unanimous in saying that the best dervish is he whose heart is free from lust for worldliness. Even in the state of celibacy he has full control over his *nafs* (lower self). Some mediocres misinterpret the following Hadith to justify their lust for sex: "I love three things out of this world: Perfume, women and *salat* (prayer)" and argue that marriage is better than celibacy.

My reply is that the Prophet (s.a.w.) has also said, "I have two occupations *faqr:* (asceticism) and *jihad* (holy war)." If you are in love with the Prophet's *Sunnah,* why do you not practice asceticism and *jihad.* Why only the women. Anyone who fulfils his sensual desires for fifty years and thinks that he is acting upon the *Sunnah* is in grave error. The first calamity which befell mankind in paradise was caused by woman. The cause of the first quarrel in the world between Habil and Qabil (sons of Adam) was also a woman. Woman was also the cause of the first punishment inflicted on the two angels (Harut and Marut). All sins and crimes have been committed down to the present age because of women.

Commentary: What this means is that mankind gets involved in sins and crimes by illegal connections with the opposite sex. Legal connections are permissible.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "There will be no temptation (*fitna*) greater than woman, after I have left the world."

Commentary: Again it means woman herself is not a *fitna*. It is the unlawful relationship with her that causes *fitna*. The fault lies with the men who are responsible for unlawful behaviour with the women.

When woman can be the source of such a grave mischief in worldly affairs you can imagine how great the mischief can be in the realm of spirituality.

Commentary: The question of marrying or not marrying for the seeker of God depends on his spiritual state. The Sufi shaikhs are unanimous in saying that like the beginner in every profession, the seeker of God too has to abstain, in the beginning of his spiritual journey, from the worldly affairs including marriage. But when he has reached the destination, it is necessary for him to marry. By destination is meant the stage of *fana-fi-Allah*, because without marriage he is always distracted by human beauty and finds it difficult to concentrate on the limitlessness and formlessness of the Divine Essence necessary in the state *fana*. It is after marriage that the lust is appeased and the seeker is free to travel in the Indeterminate *dhat* (*la taayyun*) or the Absolute Being called Pure Essence (*tanzih*). Therefore the author has said the following.

In Sufism, celibacy is necessary for the beginner (novice). When he is married the conditions change, and nothing can save him except *jihad* (*mujahidah*) or struggle with the lower self. The spiritual ailment can be cured only by spiritual means. There are two ways of curbing passions, either by your effort or outer sources which are beyond your control. So far as effort is concerned, the lower self (*nafs*) can be subdued by hunger. As regards outer sources, it is fear and love of God by which the beast can be tamed and all obstacles are overcome.

Ahmad Hammad of Sarkhas, who was a great saint and a friend of mine, was once asked, "Are you troubled by the desire to marry?" He said, "No, because sometimes I am in the state of presence (*hadhur*) and sometimes in absence (*ghayub*). When I am lost, I have no consciousness of the entire universe. When I come to myself, I am able to exercise so much patience that a loaf of bread is more precious for me than thousands of *houries* of paradise." This shows the whole thing depends on self control.

Some shaikhs maintain that to marry or not to marry is beyond our power. Everything depends on the Will of God. If we are not destined to marry, we exercise patience. If we are destined to marry, we act upon the Prophet's *Sunnah* (example) and try to obey God.

The example of Prophet Yusuf is before us. When he got involved with Zulaikha, he had such a strong hold on his passion that he ran away from her privacy. In the event of marriage, Hadhrat Ibrahim is the best example. He, by virtue of his absolute confidence in God put aside all anxiety for his wife; and when his first wife Sara, felt jealous of his second wife, Hajjar (Hagar), he took her (Hagar) to the desert and left her to the care of God. This shows a man is not ruined by marriage or by celibacy, but he is ruined by yielding to the force of his *nafs* (lowerself). If he has married, he should continue to do his spiritual work regularly so that his progress is not hampered. He should also care for his wife and keep her happy by providing her the necessities of life, but should refrain from asking the princes and rich to provide for his family.

Once Shaikh Ahmad bin Harb of Nishapur was sitting with some chiefs and nobilities of the town who came to pay respect to him when his son entered the room drunk and singing and passed by them without the least sense of propriety and decorum, with the result that everybody was astonished and took offence. The shaikh said, "It is not his fault. Once our neighbours sent some food to us and we took it. The same night, this boy was begotten. We fell asleep and could not attend to usual worship. We were worried and asked the neighbour next morning as to whence the food had come. We were told that it came from a marriage in the King's palace."

The etiquettes of the celibates are as follows: They should refrain from seeing what is forbidden; nor should they lend ears to frivolities, or think of absurdities. They should quell the fire of lust by vigilance in the night and hunger. They should give no place to the world in their hearts, and must not regard their aberrations and reveries as revelation or inspiration, nor should they make the machinations of Satan an excuse for sinning. If they stick to these rules, they will be firmly established in Sufism (*tariqat*).

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

On the Lifting of the Tenth Veil: Concerning Sufi Phraseology and Definitions of their Terms and Variety of Spiritual Experiences, Secrets and Mysteries

Every science and branch of knowledge has its technical terms and expressions the meanings of which are known only to the technicians themselves. These terms have been coined for a dual purpose; firstly, to facilitate understanding of difficult topics, and secondly, to conceal the secrets of that science from the vulgar. The science of Sufism also has its technical terms to explain the meanings of various Sufi doctrines to those who are considered fit, and to conceal from those who are regarded as unfit. I will now explain some of them and will also distinguish between the various pairs of words.

Hal and *Waqt*

The term *waqt* is commonly known to the Sufis and is the subject of much discussion among them. *Waqt* is a spiritual state in which the seeker is oblivious of the past and future. It is a spiritual influence (*warid*) from God, which prevails over the mind of the seeker who loses the consciousness of time and space.

It is not the lot of everybody to have this experience. It is the spiritual pilgrims (seekers called *saliks*) who experience it. They know what it is like. They get absorbed in God so much that they have no consciousness of time and space, or of past and future.

Commentary: In this chapter the shaikh has taken up pairs of synonymous words which is a highly delicate matter, and not pairs of the opposite which are not difficult

to understand. This bears witness to the shaikh's high calibre in erudition and lofty status of gnosis (*ma'rifat*). For instance, the term *hal* and *waqt* are synonymous pair of words but *hal* and *maqam* or sobriety and intoxication are pairs of the opposite which are widely known. But the pairs of synonymous words require a highly advanced power of discretion and profound spiritual knowledge and experience to elaborate.

If they think of the past and future, they get veiled from God, which is a great distraction. The Sufi shaikhs attach great importance to *waqt*. Abu Saeed Kharraz has said: "Do not spend your precious time except for the most precious thing and the most precious thing is absorption in God."

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "I enjoy moments of nearness with God where no angel or prophet can reach." What he means is that even the eighteen thousand (spiritual) worlds cannot distract his mind. This is the reason why the Prophet (s.a.w.) did not look around during the Night of Ascension and fixed his gaze at Divine Beauty, as described by God in the following words: "His eyes neither swerved nor strayed." [53:17]

Now because God is the greatest prize for the Prophet (s.a.w.), the greatest man went in for the greatest prize. The state of *waqt* is of two kinds: *faqd* (loss) and *wajd* (gain). i.e. union and separation. The seeker is completely overpowered in both of these states. During *wajd* he is overpowered by Divine Presence, and in *faqd* he is overpowered by grief and pangs of separation. And in both states he loses his will and consciousness, and therefore what he does is the result of his *waqt*.

Junaid says, "Once I saw a dervish sitting troubled under a thorny bush in the desert. When I asked him why he was sitting on an uneven ground, he said, 'I was in the state of *hal* which has disappeared here.' When I asked him for how long had he been sitting there, he said, 'For twelve years.' He asked me to pray for him. When I performed the *hajj*, I prayed for him. It seems my prayer was accepted, because when I went there again, I saw him still there, and I asked why he was still there when his objective has been gained. He said, 'O shaikh, I sat here for twelve years when I had lost my (spiritual) wealth, how can I leave it when I have found it again. I will go on sitting here till my dust is mingled with the dust of this blessed place.' "

Commentary: A poet has said:

Who has the audacity to leave the beloved's court;.
We will continue to sit till our dust is blown by winds.

Waqt is not a commodity to be obtained by effort or purchased in the market so that the lover may get it at the expense of his life. The Sufi shaikhs have said "*Waqt* is a cutting sword." The sword cuts and *waqt* also cuts. The sword cuts material things into pieces, *waqt* cuts man from the past and future and makes him oblivious of time and space. A sword is a dangerous thing. It does not distinguish between the neck of a friend or a foe. Even if one hangs it in his neck close to the heart for a thousand years, it does not discriminate between its master's neck and the neck of his enemy. This is because violence (*qahr*) is its *sifat* (attribute), which cannot be separated from it at the will of its master.

Commentary: Similarly, '*waqt*' has the capacity to overmaster the spiritual seeker and cuts him off from the whole universe.

Hal is the name of an ecstasy which prevails over *waqt* and adorns it like the soul which adorns the body. Therefore *waqt* is in need of *hal* as it is beautified by it and subsists by it. When a man of *waqt* becomes man of *hal* as well, he is no more subject to change i.e. when *waqt* and *hal* are coexistent, the seeker is called "*sahib-i-tamkin-o-istaqlal*" (firm and steadfast).

Waqt without *hal* is in the danger of decay (*ziwal*). But when *waqt* and *hal* combine the whole life turns into *waqt* and the danger of decay is averted. And what appears to be coming and going (change in the states) are really the degrees of *tamkin* (steadfastness) and *zahur* (manifestation), i.e. the process of getting stronger and stronger every moment. Another thing is that while negligence (*ghaflat*) is possible for the man of *waqt*, it is not possible for the man of *hal*. The Sufi shaikhs have said: "The tongue of the possessor of *hal* is silent (incapable of describing) but his actions give out the secret."

That is why a shaikh has said "*sawal* (question) about *hal* is *mahal* (impossible)." This is because *hal* makes you dumb. Master Abu Ali Daqqaq has said: "When thou art in the state of *waqt*, thou art affected by sorrow and happiness of this world and of the next. But when *hal* comes from God, it makes thee oblivious of everything."

Thus Hadhrat Ya'qub (Jacob) was in the state of *waqt*, and therefore sometimes he was blinded by separation and sometimes his eyesight was restored by union. Sometimes he was weeping and wailing and sometimes he was happy. But Hadhrat Ibrahim was in the state of *hal*. Therefore, he was neither happy at the time of union nor unhappy at the time of separation. The sun, moon and stars helped him in that he witnessed God in them and said: "I love not that sets." [6:76]

Therefore, when the man of *waqt* experiences separation from God, the world turns into hell for him and when he is in the state of union the world becomes paradise for him. But the man of *hal* is never affected by the veils of separation or blessings of union

(vision). In essence, *hal* is the status of the *murad* and *waqt* is the status of the *murid*. While the former is engrossed in God, the latter is engrossed in his *waqt* (spiritual state itself).

Commentary: *Hal* and *waqt* are synonymous terms, but there is subtle difference between them. This bears witness to the author's high standard of *ma'rifat* (Gnosis) as he is capable of pointing out the subtle difference between them.

Murid and *murad* are mentioned here not in the etymological sense, but these are technical terms having special connotation. *Murid* is defined as lover of God and *murad* is he who is loved by God. *Murid* is the seeker of God and *murad* is sought by God. This definition is not the innovation of the Sufis but is based on the following *ayat* of the Holy Qur'an: "Allah attracts to Himself those whom He likes and guides to Himself those who seek Him." [42:13]. *Waqt* is often defined as *talwin* (changeable) and *hal* as *tamkin* (unchangeable steadfastness). These spiritual states cannot be understood before they are experienced. To understand the Sufis properly one has to be somewhat of a Sufi.

Section

Maqam and *Tamkin*

Commentary: The terms *maqam* and *tamkin* are again synonymous terms with a subtle difference in between, and not pairs of opposites. The opposite of *maqam* is called *hal* and the opposite of *tamkin* is *talwin*. As already said, it shows how the author is gifted with the highest calibre or capability to know and explain the minutest and the most subtle difference between two synonymous states of Sufism.

In Sufism *maqam* is the name of man's intrinsic potentials to love and seek God with the greatest effort and utmost sincerity. Every seeker is endowed with a certain inclination for God which finally becomes the cause of his search for Him. Although the seeker is benefited by all kinds of *maqams*, he ultimately sticks to the one which is in accord with his nature. As God has said: "There is none who does not have a certain *maqam* (station)." [37:164]. Hadhrat Adam's *maqam* was *taubah* (repentance); that of Nuh (Noah) was asceticism (*zuhd*); that of Ibrahim was resignation (*taslim*); that of Musa (Moses) was penitence (*inabat*); that of Daud (David) was sorrow (*huzn*); that of Isa (Jesus) was hope (*raja*); that of Yahya (John) was fear (*khauf*) and the *maqam* of the Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) was *dhikr* (*praise*). Although every one drew benefits from various sources, ultimately he got established at his original station (*maqam*). The difference between

hal and *maqam* has already been explained in the section on the Muhasibi school of thought. Here it is repeated briefly.

There are three kinds of ways to God: (1) *maqam*, (2) *hal* and (3) *tamkin*. God sent about one hundred and twenty-four thousand prophets to mankind to explain the ways of approaching God, and to elucidate the stations. By the teaching of our Prophet (s.a.w.), every follower of his was gifted with a *hal* peculiar to his station, which culminated on a pitch where human effort gained its object and the religion of Islam reached perfection as declared by God in the Holy Qur'an, "Today I have perfected your religion for you and have completed My bounty unto you." [5:5].

It is then that *tamkin* of the steadfast became manifest. But if I try to explain the details of each and every kind of *hal*, my object of keeping the book brief would be defeated.

In short, *tamkin* means being firmly established at the highest stage of perfection. While it is possible for the people of *maqam* to go on progressing from stage to stage, there is no stage higher than *tamkin*. *Maqam* is the stage of the beginners (*mubtadi*) while the stage of *tamkin* is the lot of the adept (*muntahi*). Progress is possible from the beginning to the end, but it is not possible beyond the end (*intiha*), because *maqamat* are the various stations on the way, but *tamkin* is the name of repose in God. The friends of God (*auliya-Allah*) are absent from themselves and present with God, present in the sense that they live in God and by God, (called *fana-fi-Allah* and *baqa-bi-Allah* respectively) simultaneously. In ancient pre-Islamic times when a poet reached the court of the chief whom he had eulogised in his poetry, he would cut the legs of his camel and break his sword to indicate his decision to stay there for good and never leave him. He broke the sword because he had nothing to fear in that court. This is what God meant when he said to Hadhrat Musa:

"Take off your shoes and throw away your staff because shoes and staff are signs of the journey. But when the destination is reached there is no need for journeying anymore."[40:12]

It means that in the realm of love, there is search in the beginning and peace in the end, like water in the channels which runs fast through the hills, but when it reaches the ocean it is calm and quiet. On reaching the ocean (of Divinity), the next stage for the seeker is to dive and bring out pearls, or finish himself in the struggle.

What is *talwin*? A shaikh has said, "*tamkin* is the act of passing from *talwin*." *Talwin* is one of the technical terms in Sufism. It is synonymous with *hal*, and *tamkin* is synonymous with *maqam*. *Talwin* literally means changing colours. In Sufism it signifies that the seeker is in the state of being always overpowered by various ecstasies and charms of Divine nearness and presence. Whereas *tamkin* is the state of being firmly rooted in the realm of Divinity so that no storm and gale could shake him. Hadhrat

Musa was in the state of *talwin* at the time when God revealed His glory to him at Mount Sinai and he fell in a swoon [7:139]. But Hadhrat Muhammad was at the stage of *tamkin* and remained steadfast even when he was at a distance of only two bows from God. This is the highest stage of perfection.

Tamkin is of two kinds: Domination of Divine Presence (*mushahidah-i-haq*) and domination of one's ownself (*mushahidah-i-khud*). The former is called *fana-fi-Allah* and the latter is termed *baqa-bi-Allah*. The former is characterised by intoxication in which the terms *mahw* (intoxication) and *sahw* (sobriety), *fana* (annihilation) and *baqa* (subsistence), *wajud* (being) and *adam* (not-being) do not apply to the seeker of that stage, because when the seeker is lost in the ocean of Divinity, how can his attributes exist?

Section

Muhadhirah and *Mukashfah*

Commentary: These are again two synonymous terms which apparently bear the same meanings, but there is a subtle difference between them to be perceived only by a gnostic (*arif*) par excellence, like our author.

Muhadhirah is the state of Divine Presence caused by looking at the wonders (*lataif*) of creation, and *mukashfah* is the state of Divine Presence caused by visions of the unseen inner world. In other words, *muhadhirah* is the state of Divine nearness resulting from witnessing the bewildering scenes of nature (phenomena), while *mukashfah* is the state of nearness resulting from bewildering influence of Divine Essence (*dhat*). The sign of *muhadhirah* is this, that the seeker attains to the state of *fana* in Divine Attributes; while in *mukashfah* he gains *fana* (effacement) in Divine Essence called the Absolute Being, with the difference that in the former case, the seeker is amazed by Divine Acts (*af'al*) while the latter by Divine Majesty (*Jalal*). The former is characterised by friendship, while the latter by love. It is for this reason that when Hadhrat Ibrahim (peace be upon him) looked at the kingdom of heaven (*malakut*) and pondered over its wonders, he turned from the creation to the Creator and exclaimed: "I turn my face sincerely to God who is the Creator of heaven and earth." [6:79]

But when the beloved of God, Hadhrat Muhammad (s.a.w.) went to heaven (in the Night of Ascension), he shut his eyes to all created things, and saw neither acts of God nor himself, but got fully absorbed or lost in God Himself with the result that his yearnings went on multiplying. He was blessed with nearness, but went on thirsting for greater degrees of nearness. The more he got near to God, the greater was his craving for a higher degree of nearness. As he flew more and more, in the realm of Divine Essence

(*tanzih*), the greater was his bewilderment (*tahyyur*), so that he could neither come back nor go forward and was totally lost in amazement.

Commentary: When the author says, "The Prophet desired Vision, Nearness and Union with God but could not get it," he really means that since God's Being is limitless and the journey to Him is inexhaustible, the more he endeavored to attain to a high degree of nearness, the more he felt restless. In other words he did enjoy Divine Vision, Nearness and Union, but was still striving for a higher degree of Vision, Nearness and Union because his thirst could not be quenched at any stage of nearness and union. It is therefore said by the Sufi shaikhs that the affair of love with God ends up in tragedy, because Divine Being is such an ocean which has no shore. The lovers may go on flying into the Divine Being for billions of years, but are unable to come to the end of the journey because there is no end to it. God is limitless. Hence this crying and shrieking, weeping and wailing of the lovers in the midst of union. Mirza Bedil has expressed this experience of restlessness in the state of union in the following words: "O Dear Beloved, I have been drinking cups of the wine of Thy nearness for the whole of my life, but my thirst can never be quenched. How cruel Thou art in not coming into my embrace from my embrace."

This frustration of 'not coming into my embrace from my embrace' is a perpetual tragedy of the lovers of God. Saadi has expressed this experience in the following words:

"His beauty has no end, nor is there an end to my love. Like the patient of thirst disease I shall die of drinking at the river bank, but the river will continue to flow."

Rumi has expressed his similar experience in the following words: "The Beloved is in my embrace and I am crying for the Beloved like the patient of thirst disease, thirsting for water at the river bank."

This state of separation in union and union in separation is the final stage of the spiritual journey called *jamiyyat*, which means the combination of the states of *fana* and *baqa* (union and separation) simultaneously.

Saadi says: "The wonder is not that I am mad in love. The wonder is that I am united and separated at one and the same time."

When Hadhrat Ali was asked, "Have you seen God." He replied, "Do I worship one whom I do not see?" When asked to explain, he said, "He can be seen not by the eyes of the head but by the eyes of the spirit (*ruh*). He is near without being touched, and is far without being separated."

Khullat (friendship) is infidelity (*kufr*), and *muhabbat* (love) is polytheism (*shyrk*) but union is monotheism (*tauhid*).

Commentary: Here our author is speaking like ibn Arabi and is defending *wahdat-ul-wujud*. Friendship is *kufr* (infidelity) and love is polytheism (*shyrk*) because both love and friendship presuppose duality (*doi*) i.e. two beings, the lover and the beloved. But in actual fact being is one and that is God's Being, all other beings in the universe are relative. They are contained in Divine Being like the waves, bubbles and pieces of ice in the ocean. Therefore, in the realm of Reality (*haqiqat*), worship—which presupposes two beings (lover and beloved)—is *kufr;* but in the realm of phenomenon (*majaz*), worship is a virtue.

Man is the combination of the body and soul. In the world of phenomenon (*majaz*) he lives by the body, and in the world of Reality (*haqiqat*) he lives by the soul. It is this curse of duality or double life which the lover yearns to finish but it is impossible to do so long as they live and love. This quest or struggle from nearness to greater nearness (*qaribtar*) continues even after death and lasts forever up to eternity. This is the tragedy of human life caused by human nature. Love can never be satisfied since there is no end to Divine Beauty. Saadi has rightly said: "Neither is there an end to His Beauty nor an end to Saadi's cravings."

This is the reason why Shibli use to pray: "O Guide of the bewildered, increase my bewilderment."

Commentary: This is because in sobriety, the lover is torn by pangs of separation, and in intoxication he is appeased by the pleasures of union. By bewilderment he means union, because one is completely lost in the state of oneness with the Divine Being.

It is related that Abu Saeed Kharraz and Ibrahim Saad Alawi once saw a dervish sitting on the bank of a river, and they asked him, "What is the way to God?" He said, "There are two ways: the way of the vulgar (*awam*) and the way of the elite (*khawas*). The way of the vulgar is the one you are treading, because you are chained by the shackles of the law of cause and effect. You look at the creation and think of the Creator. But the elite look only at the Causer." That is to say they see the Creator in the creation (which is again *wahdat-ul-wujud*).

Section

Qabd (Contraction) and *Bast* (Expansion)

Know that *qabd* and *bast* are two involuntary states experienced by the Sufis over which they have no control. These can neither be attained nor repulsed by effort. It is said in the Qur'an:

"God contracts and expands" [2:246]

In Sufism *qabd* means the state of being veiled from God; and *bast* means removal of the veil and return of revelation (*kashf*). Both of these states are the acts of God, beyond the power of the seeker to get them or avoid them. When the hardship of contraction is experienced by the novices it is known as fear, but when it is experienced by the adept it is called *qabd*. Similarly, when expansion is experienced by the novices it is called hope, but when it is experienced by the adept it is called *bast*.

According to some shaikhs *qabd* is better than *bast* for the following two reasons: firstly, because it is mentioned before *bast* in the Qur'an, and secondly because it is hard on the *nafs* (lowerself), while *bast* is a sign of leniency. And undoubtedly, hardship on *nafs* is better than leniency which causes a veil. But there are some who regard *bast* as superior to *qabd* because according to the Arabs, the worse thing is mentioned first and what is better is mentioned after. For instance, God says in the Qur'an:

"There are those who harm themselves and there are those who are moderate." [35:32]

Moreover, *qabd* is full of affliction of separation and *bast* is the happiness of union. Naturally union is better than separation. But according to my shaikh, *qabd* and *bast* mean one and the same thing because both are caused by God. In both the states, either the soul is oppressed and the *nafs* (lowerself) is happy or the *nafs* is oppressed and the soul is happy. The former state is *qabd* for the soul and *bast* for the *nafs*, while the latter state is *bast* for the soul and *qabd* for the *nafs*. To argue in the matter anymore is an exercise in futility.

Says Abu Yazid: "*Qabd* of the *qalb* (soul) is the *bast* of *nafs* and *bast* of *qalb* is the *qabd* of *nafs*." *Nafs* is saved by *qabd* and *qalb* (soul) is saved by *bast*. This is because love is accompanied by jealousy. *Qabd* is the result of God's anger and *bast* is the result of mutual understanding, since the lovers do understand one another. It is related that Prophet Yahya (John) wept since he was born, and Prophet Isa (Jesus) smiled since he was born. This is because the former's case was of contraction (*qabd*) and the latter of expansion (*bast*). When they met, Yahya said, "O Jesus, were you immune from the fear of separation?" Jesus said, "O Yahya, did you have no hope of Divine Mercy? The fact is that neither your tears nor my happiness can change Divine Decree." So that states of *qabd* and *bast*, love and hatred, intoxication and sobriety all proceed from God Almighty.

Section

Uns and *Haibat* (Intimacy and Awe)

Uns (intimacy) and *haibat* (awe) are two states of Sufis experienced in the spiritual journey to God. When the Sufi is influenced by God's attribute of *Jalal* (Majesty) his heart is filled with awe (*haibat*), and when he is affected by His attribute of *Jamal* (Beauty) his heart is filled with *uns* (intimacy). Those who are in the state of *uns* feel happy, while those who are in the state of *haibat* are distressed. So there is a great difference between the one whose heart is burnt with the fire of *Jalal* and the one who is happy with the manifestation of Divine Beauty.

Some Sufi shaikhs maintain that *haibat* is the stage (*maqam*) of the *arifin* (gnostics), and *uns* of the beginners, because he who is nearer God is more distressed by awe of Divine Presence, and less influenced by the feelings of *uns*. This class of shaikhs is also of the view that intimacy is possible only between homogeneous beings, but since God is not homogeneous with man, there can be no love or intimacy between God and man. If *uns* is possible, it would be in the nature of praise (*dhikr*) of God. But *haibat* is the result of *mushahidah* (vision) of Divine Majesty. There is a great difference between the one who attributes everything to himself, and the one who has lost himself in God (*fani-fi-Allah*) and the one who subsists by Him (*baqi-bi-Allah*).

Commentary: The possibility of love between God and man is evident from a large number of verses of the Holy Qur'an and sayings of the Prophet (s.a.w.), and therefore cannot be ruled out. Those who say that love or intimacy is conceivable only between homogeneous beings, must know that man is the combination of body and soul. While the body belongs to the material world, the soul is of Divine Origin in terms of the *ayat* in which God says: "We breathed out of Our soul into him (man)." [15:29] The word 'Our soul' (Divine Soul) is enough to establish some sort of homogeneity between God and man and cannot be ruled out altogether, more so because we the humans live by the soul much more than we live by the body which is a handful of dust. Our walking, our talking, our seeing and hearing, etc. are by virtue of the soul which is of Divine Origin. So it can safely be said that man is predominantly of Divine Nature and is homogeneous with God from the spiritual point of view (*haqiqat*) and heterogeneous from the physical point of view (*majaz*).

Says Shibli: "I was under the impression that I was happy with intimacy and *mushahidah* (vision) of God. But I have come to know now that intimacy is possible only with the homogeneous." There are some who are of the opinion that *haibat* is the result of fear

of separation and *uns* of union and grace. Therefore, the seekers of God should abstain from the affairs of *haibat* and endeavour for affairs of *uns* because *uns* is the result of love.

My shaikh used to say, "I wonder at those who maintain that love with God is not possible after He has said: 'Say to my servants', and 'When my servants ask thee', and 'O my servants, no fear shall come on you and you shall not be grieved'." [43:68]

A servant of God cannot fail to love Him when he witnesses His favours and bounties. And when he loves God, he reaches the stage of intimacy (*uns*) automatically, because awe is the result of heterogeneity (*beganegi*) and intimacy is caused by homogeneity (*yaganegi*). It is in the nature of man to love one who is kind to him. When we are recipient of so many gifts, favours and bounties from God, including His *ma'rifat* (gnosis), how can we talk of *haibat*?

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi say that both the parties are unnecessarily troubled by controversies. The fact is that God's *haibat* is meant to crush the evils of man's lowerself i.e. to annihilate his animal self, while His *uns* is to foster or nourish his soul. Therefore, God manifests His attribute of Majesty to annihilate the *nafs* (beastly self) to enable his lovers to reach the state of *fana* and He reveals His attribute of Beauty to enable them to gain the state of *baqa*. Hence, those who are at the stage of *fana-fi-Allah* regard *haibat* as superior, while those who are at the stage of *baqa-bi-Allah* maintain that *uns* is superior. The doctrines of *fana* and *baqa* have already been elaborated in this book.

Commentary: These remarks on the part of our author show how high and exalted was his status in the scale of *ma'rifat* or intimate knowledge of God's Essence and Attribute, called 'gnosis' which is a poor equivalent of *ma'rifat* in the English language.

Section

Qahr and *Lutf*
(Violence and Kindness)

Qahr (violence) and *Lutf* (kindness) are the terms used by the Sufis. *Qahr* is a sort of Divine help to overcome the vices and mischiefs of the lowerself (*nafs*); and *lutf* is the name of Divine Grace to gain the state of union with God and to maintain it permanently. Some of the shaikhs have gone to the extent of saying *lutf* is God's real grace (*karamat*). Hence, they are called *ahli-lutf* (people of *lutf*). But there are others who believe that the real grace of God (*karamat*) is this: that He guides his lovers according to His own

will and not their will, so that man's will should never be fulfilled and that he should reach the stage of 'willessness' (*namuradi*) to the extent that if he approaches a river to quench his thirst, the river gets dry.

It is said that there were two dervishes in Baghdad, both of them being shaikhs of high order. One of them was a believer in *qahr* and the other believed in *lutf*, and both of them were trying to defend their own notions. One maintained that God's *lutf* was the highest of all His bounties because He has said: "Allah is *latif* (kind) to his servants," [22:63], while the other said *qahr* is the best of all His bounties because He has said: "And He is *qahir* over His servants." [6:18]. The controversy continued unabated till the shaikh who believed in *lutf* proceeded to Makkah. But he lost his way in the desert and nothing was heard of him for a long time. Once a man who was travelling from Makkah to Baghdad met him in the desert. That shaikh sent the following message to his friend in Baghdad, "My dear brother, if you wish to see the desert as beautiful and charming as Baghdad come here and see how God has turned the desert into Baghdad." When the message was delivered to him, he said "If you go back, tell my friend, 'It is not a wonder that the desert has turned into Baghdad by God's grace. The wonder is that God has turned Baghdad into a desert for me so that I am happy and contented in it despite all the rigours and hardship of urban life I am facing.'"

Commentary: What this story means is that both *qahr* and *lutf* are spiritual states bestowed by God upon His seekers, and therefore the best attitude on man's part is to be happy and contented under all circumstances. It is then that God enables the lover of *lutf* to see gardens of Baghdad in the desert, the lover of *qahr* to experience the rigours of the desert in Baghdad.

Abu Bakr Shibli use to pray like this: "O My Lord, I will never leave You even if You make the sky a collar for my neck, and the earth a shackle for my feet."

My shaikh said: "Once there was a congregation of the saints (*auliya*) in the desert, and my shaikh Husri allowed me to come with him. What I saw was that some saints were coming on camels, some on the thrones flying in the air and some on foot, and my shaikh did not pay any attention to them. But when he saw a bareheaded youth with torn shoes and a broken staff in his hand, and a body thin and lean, he stood up to greet him and brought him to sit on a lofty place. I was astonished to see this, and after the congregation was over I asked my shaikh about that youth. He said the young man was a kind of saint who did not follow *walayat* (saintship) but *walayat* followed him, and that he paid no attention to miracles."

In short, what we choose for ourselves becomes affliction for us. I am always pleased with what God chooses for me, and pray to Him to protect me at all times. If He is pleased to keep me in the state of *qahr* I will not wish to be in *lutf*, and if he likes to keep me in *luft* I will not pray for *qahr*. I have no choice. His choice is my choice.

Section

Nafi and *Asbat*
(Negation and Affirmation)

According to the Sufi shaikhs, the word *nafi* stands for negating the desires of the lowerself (*nafs*), and *asbat* for accepting the will of God. That is to say, *nafi* means negation of human attributes and *asbat* to live or subsist by Divine attributes. But since total negation of human attributes is not possible so long as man lives, by negation the Sufis mean negation of bad habits, and development of good habits. Some shaikhs are of the opinion that *nafi* means the negation of your own will and acceptance of the Will of God. This question has been discussed at length in the chapter on *fana* and *baqa* and on *faqr* and *safwat*. It will, therefore, be explained here briefly.

A celebrated shaikh has said: "God's choice for the servant with His knowledge of the servant is better than the choice of the servant for himself with his ignorance of God." This is because according to the code of love, the lover has to give up his choice for what the Beloved chooses for him. Once when a dervish was drowning in a river, someone said to him, "O brother, do you wish to be saved?" He said, "No." When he was asked, "Do you wish to be drowned?" He said, "No." "What a strange person you are," said the man on the land, "You neither wish to die nor to live." The dervish said, "I have nothing to do with life or death. What I wish is God's wish."

The Sufi shaikhs believe that in the scale of love for God, the least sacrifice is to surrender your will to the Will of God. It must be understood that man's surrender to God's will is possible, but God's surrender to man's will is impossible. Therefore, the best course is to surrender your will to the Will of God, and not try to achieve the impossible. When Hadhrat Musa (Moses) desired to have a vision of God, it was refused, because the prophet (a.s.) exercised his will.

Section

Musamrah and *Muhadithah*

Musamrah and *muhadithah* are two states experienced by the adepts who have reached perfection. *Muhadithah* literally means to talk about something. In Sufi terminology it connotes Divine Secrets whispered into the ears of the Sufis. And *musamrah* is the act of concealment of those secrets. In other words, *musamrah* is the name of secret conversation with God in the night and *muhadithah* means the same thing at day time. Generally speaking, supplications to the Lord during the day are called *muhadithah* and during the night are called *musamrah*. The former is called *kashf* (revelation) while the latter is known as *sitr* (concealment). In Sufism, *musamrah* is regarded superior to

muhadithah. What was revealed to the Prophet (s.a.w.) in the Night of Ascension (*Mi'raj*) was of the nature of *musamrah* which consisted of despatching Jibrail for taking the Prophet (s.a.w.) from Makkah to the Lord with the distance of two bows in between, and revelation of Divine Secrets with which the Prophet (s.a.w.) was amazed, and could only say, "I am unable to praise Thee as Thou ought to be praised...."

And the term *muhadithah* applies to the Prophet Musa when he was called to Mount Sinai, and was blessed with conversation with the Lord. But when he expressed his desire to have a vision, it was rejected and he apologised to the Lord. There is a plain difference between one who was invited and the one who wants. In short, night is the time when the lovers meet, and day is the time when the servants wait on the Master. When a servant oversteps his limits, he is reprimanded but there are no limits for the lovers of God and therefore there is no question of crossing the limits and incurring God's displeasure.

Section

Ilm-ul-yaqin, Ain-ul-yaqin, Haq-ul-yaqin
(Conviction based on Knowledge, Seeing, and Experiencing)

Know that these three terms denote Knowledge of the Known (God). But knowledge without certainty (*yaqin*) is nothing. It is by conviction that knowledge of a thing becomes like seeing that thing. Therefore, God's vision (*didar*) tomorrow on the Day of Judgement will be strictly in accordance with the degree of our conviction (*yaqin*) in Him today in this world. If his vision tomorrow is not according to his belief today, then it means either his knowledge in God was erroneous or his vision in the hereafter was not correct. Both of these alternatives are against the principle of *tauhid* (unification) which demands that God's vision tomorrow must be in accordance with his knowledge today in that his knowledge (*ilm-ul-yaqin*) is like his *ain-ul-yaqin* and *ain-ul-yaqin* like *ilm-ul-yaqin*. Those who think that *ain-ul-yaqin* regarding vision (*ruyat*) is all that is required, are wrong, because seeing is a means of knowledge like hearing but seeing or hearing does not provide full knowledge of the thing seen or heard.

According to the Sufis, *ilm-ul-yaqin* means knowledge of religious laws and practices; *ain-ul-yaqin* means knowledge at the time of dying; and *haq-ul-yaqin* is the name of having a vision (*ruyat*) of God in paradise. Therefore, *ilm-ul-yaqin* is the stage of theologians (*ulama*) on account of their observance of Divine Commands, *ain-ul-yaqin* is the stage of the gnostics (*arifin*) on account of their readiness for death and *haq-ul-yaqin* is the altar of the lovers who sacrifice themselves for the Beloved by turning away from everything for His sake. Therefore, *ilm-ul-yaqin* is obtained by *mujahidah*, *ain-ul-yaqin* by *muhabbat* (love) and *haq-ul-yaqin* by *mushahidah* (vision). The first is the stage of the commoners, second of the elect (*khas*) and third of the elect of elect (*khas-ul-khas*).

Commentary: *Ilm-ul-yaqin* means belief in God based on knowledge provided in the Holy Qur'an and Hadith; *ain-ul-yaqin* is the degree of belief or conviction based on actual vision of God, which is stronger than the former; and *haq-ul-yaqin* is the superlative degree of conviction in God's Being based on actual spiritual experience which is stronger than *ain-ul-yaqin*.

It can be understood better by the following example: Suppose you have not seen fire and someone tells you that it burns. This degree of your belief in fire or its burning quality is of the nature of *ilm-ul-yaqin*. When fire is burnt in front of you and you see with your own eyes the wood being burnt, the degree of your belief is of the second category i.e. *ain-ul-yaqin*. But when you put your hand in fire, you get the actual experience of being burnt. This degree of certainty is called *haq-ul-yaqin* which is stronger than *ilm-ul-yaqin* and *ain-ul-yaqin*. This stage of Divine Nearness or Union is called *fana-fi-Allah* in Sufi terminology which again has numerous degrees called *maratib-i-qurb*.

Since God's Being is limitless, the stages or degrees of nearness are also limitless. The lovers may go on flying in God's Being for millions and billions of years but they are unable to exhaust God's limitless Being. What can be exhausted cannot be God!

Section

Ilm and *Ma'rifat*
(Knowledge and Gnosis)

Knowledge and Gnosis are the Sufi terms between which the theologians of Islam have made no distinction and regarded them as synonymous, except that according to them, God can be called *alim* (Knower) and not *arif* (Gnostic). But according to the Sufi shaikhs, knowledge, which is accompanied by practice and results in *hal* (spiritual experience of Reality) is called *ma'rifat*, and he who has this kind of knowledge is known as *arif*; while the knowledge which is not accompanied by practice and *hal* is called *ilm*, and he who possesses it is called *alim*.

In other words, he who is conversant with the inner meanings and reality of a thing is *arif*, while he who knows only the theory is *alim*. That is the reason why the Sufis, when they want to criticise their opponents call them *danishmand* (letterists). This may be objectionable to the ordinary people, but what the Sufis mean is not the vilification of anybody. They blame the theorists only for their lack of practice for "the *alim* is dependent on his knowledge and the *arif* on the Lord." This has already been discussed at length in the chapter on "Lifting of the Veil on *Ma'rifat*."

Section

Shariat and *Haqiqat* (The Law and Reality)

These also are Sufi terms. The former means the outward law and the latter stands for inward perfection. But the confusion in this behalf has been created by two divergent views held by the exoteric theologians and a section of heretics. While the theologian see no difference between *shariat* and *haqiqat* saying that *shariat* is *haqiqat* and *haqiqat* is *shariat*, the heretics assert that the one is possible without the other, saying that when the Truth is revealed, the Law is unnecessary.

But this is the doctrine of the satanic sects called Qaramtiya (Carmathians), Mushabihin (Anthropomorphists) and Muwaswisin (Agnostics). The fact is that both *shariat* and *haqiqat* are valid and interdependent. *Shariat* is incomplete without *haqiqat* and *haqiqat* is not perfect without *shariat*. *Shariat* is like the body and *haqiqat* is the soul therein. The value of the body and soul lies in their being together. *Shariat* without *tariqat* is *riya* (ostentation), and *haqiqat* without *shariat* is *nifaq* (hypocrisy). God Almighty has said: "Those who strive to gain Our nearness, we guide them to Our nearness." [29:69]

Here, striving is the Law and guidance is Truth. *Shariat* is the name of observance of the ordinances of Islam, and *haqiqat* is Divine gift in terms of the spiritual experiences of Divine Nearness. In other words, *shariat* is man's act and *haqiqat* is God's Grace.

Second Category of Sufi Terms Employed with Metaphor to Describe their Spiritual Experiences

The preceding was the first kind of Sufi terminology. The second kind is of those terms which have metaphorical significance and are difficult to explain. However, an attempt will be made. These are as follows:

Haq: By *Haq* which literally means Truth, the Sufis mean God since *Haq* is one of the names of God. It is said in the Qur'an: "This is because God is the Truth." [22:6].

Haqiqat: By *haqiqat* they mean attainment of the state of union (oneness) with God or reaching the stage of *Tanzih* (Indeterminate Being).

Khatarat: The thoughts coming in the state of separation (*tafriqa*).

Watanat: The states of Divine presence.

Tams: Negation of things other than God.

Alaiq: The things which stand in the seeker's way of union.

Wasait: The things which help the seeker to gain God's Nearness.

Zawaid: Excessive illumination in the heart.

Fawaid: Spiritual cognition of what is helpful in the way of God.

Malja: Confidence in the attainment of the object.

Manja: Escape from obstructions in the way of nearness.

Kulliyyat: Absorption of human attributes in Divine Attributes.

Lawaih: Affirmation of attaining of objectives after negation of obstacles.

Lawami: Manifestation of Divine Lights.

Tawali: Dawning of the lights of Truth on the heart of the seeker.

Tawariq: Secret praises or admonitions received during nights.

Lataif: Reception of Divine subtleties in the heart.

Sirr: Concealment of Divine Secrets.

Najwa: Concealment of one's imperfections.

Isharat: Giving information of the spiritual state by hints, not clear words.

Ima: Speaking elusively with the help of words or unspoken hints.

Warid: Descent of spiritual influences on the heart.

Intibah: Getting rid of heedlessness.

Ishtibah: The state of indecision regarding truth and falsehood.

Qarar: Disappearance of doubt.

Inziaj: Throbbings of the heart in the state of ecstasy.

Third Category of Sufi Terms Employed without Metaphor to Describe their Spiritual Experiences

Alam: It means creation or universe. It is said by the Sufis that there are eighteen or fifty thousand spiritual worlds. But according to the philosophers there are two worlds: The upper (*alwi*) and lower (*sifli*) world. The *ulama* maintain that whatever exists between God's Throne (*arsh*) and the earth is *Alam*; in short *alam* signifies the collective mass of material things. The Sufis on the other hand speak of *alam-i-arwah* (World of souls) and *alam-i-nafus* (World of Spirits) and differ from the philosophers.

Some of such other terms are as follows:

Muhdath: It means posterior in existence i.e. what did not exist from eternity.

Qadim: It means anterior in existence i.e. which exists from eternity to eternity. It refers to God's Being.

Azal: That which has no beginning.

Abad: That which has no end.

Dhat: Reality of something.

Sifat: Attributes which are not self existent but exist by one who possesses the attributes.

Ism: Name.

Tasmiyat: Information about the named.

Nafi: Negation.

Ithbat: Affirmation.

Shai'an: Possibility of two things existing together.

Dhiddan: Impossibility of two things existing together.

Ghairan: Possibility of any two things existing, independent without each other.

Jawahir: That which subsists independently.

Ardh: That which cannot subsist independently.

Jism: That which is composed of several parts.

Sawal: Question to see reality.

Jawab: Answer about reality.

Husn: That which is in conformity to Divine Will.

Qubh: That which is not in conformity to Divine Will.

Safah: Neglect of Divine Command.

Zulm: To put a thing in unworthy environments.

Adl: To put a thing in suitable environments.

Malik: He whose action cannot be disobeyed.

Fourth Category of Terms

Another category of Sufi terms which needs explanation is of the words which are commonly used by the Sufis, but of which the philologists do not understand their meanings. These are as follows:

Khatir: *Khatir* is a fleeting thought which comes in the mind and makes room for another thought without the will of the thinker. In such cases the Sufis give preference to the first thought which is supposed to come from God. Once Khairun Nassaj was sitting in his house when a thought came to his mind that his shaikh Junaid was standing at his door. But he paid no attention to it. When this thought came twice and thrice he went out and saw Junaid standing at the door. Junaid said "Had you acted upon the custom of the *mashaikh* and obeyed the first thought, I would have been saved the trouble of standing all this time." Now the question is, how did Junaid know what thought had occurred in the mind of Nassaj? The answer is that since Junaid was his spiritual guide, he could know what was happening to his *murid*.

Commentary: Now the question arises, when it is said in the Qur'an that *Ilm-i-ghaib* (knowledge of the unseen) is not possible for anyone except God, how can a man know what is in the mind of another man? The answer is that what has been said in the Qur'an is a general rule. But there are always exceptions to the rules mentioned in the Qur'an itself. For it is also said in the same Qur'an that nobody has the knowledge of the unseen (*ghaib*) except when Allah reveals that knowledge to him. Such exceptions are known as *mu'jizat* (miracles) in respect of prophets and *karamat* (supernatural deeds) in respect of saints (*auliya-Allah*), and the Qur'an and Hadith are full of such deeds. This answer continues to be given in nonetheless but the question also continues to be asked by those lacking level-headed and balanced minds, and therefore the controversy continues to rage, creating unnecessary dissension within the *ummah*.

Once Maulana Ashraf Ali of Deoband school of thought was asked if *ilm-i-ghaib* is possible for man. He said, "Yes, but what you people call *ilm-i-ghaib*, it is not possible for God Himself, because nothing is *ghaib* (unknown) for Him." What he meant was that when the inner eyes of a *wali-Allah* are opened in terms of the following Hadith al-Qudsi al-Bukhari, *ghaib* (unseen) becomes *hadhir* (present) to him:

"Allah says when a servant (*abd*) of Mine tries to seek My nearness by supererogatory worship, I love him and come so close to him that I become his eyes and he sees by Me, I become his ears and he hears by Me; I become his hands, and he takes by Me, and I become his feet and he walks by Me."

It also happens that when Allah wishes, He denies knowledge of the unseen to anyone, He contracts his vision; and when He wishes to let him have that knowledge, He expands his vision.

Waqia: *Waqia* is the thought which comes and sinks in the mind, never to leave him unlike *khatir*. Therefore, it is said about *khatir: Khatara ala qalbi*, (it occurred to my mind.) But in regard to *al-waqia* it is said: *Wa waqa fi qalbi* (it sank into my mind). So it is said that *khatrat* (thoughts) can occur to any person, but '*alwaqiat*' comes to the minds of only those who are men of God (friends of God called *auliya-Allah*).

Ikhtiyar: *Ikhtiyar* according to the Sufis means giving preference to God's will over their own will, and to be satisfied with any good or evil as gifts of God. Moreover, the Sufis believe that this act of giving preference to God's will is also God's will (decree) for unless He wishes good or bad for them, they cannot wish it for themselves. When Abu Yazid was asked who is *amir* (ruler),

he said, "He who has no will of his own to exercise and God's will becomes his will." Once Junaid caught fever and prayed to God to cure him. A voice said to him, "Who art thou to interfere in My Kingdom? I can manage it better than thou. Thou has to accept My choice instead of your choice."

Imtihan: This means a test or a trial in the form of some affliction such as grief, fear, *qabd* (contraction) and awe. As God has said: "These are the people who are subjected to trials for purification and forgiveness" [49:3]. This is a lofty status.

Bala: *Bala* is used by the Sufis to denote sufferings and affliction to which the friends of God (*auliya*) are subjected. And the more they are afflicted the greater and higher is the degree of their nearness. It is said *bala* is the ornament of *auliya*, and cradle of the saints and nourishment of the prophets. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "We prophets are the greatest sufferers in the world." He has also said: "The greatest sufferers are the prophets, then *auliya*, then those whose ranks are higher and higher." In fact, *bala* is the name of mental or physical affliction such as pain, disease or hardships meant to purify them and raise their status of Divine nearness. But the troubles which the heretics have to face are not called *bala*. They are called curses (*shakawat*) which they can never escape. So *bala* is higher than *imtihan*, for *imtihan* afflicts only the heart but *bala* engulfs the whole being. God knows better.

Tajalli: This is the name for Divine Illuminations or lights on the hearts of those who are fully devoted to the Almighty, by which they are able to see God with spiritual eyes. The difference between spiritual vision and actual vision in paradise is this, that in the former case one may see or may not see, or see at one time and not see at another. But actual seeing in paradise is not optional. They see God constantly even if they do not wish to see. This is because *tajalli* admits no veils or curtains.

Tahalli: This means an effort to look like the community which is devoted to Islam in letter and spirit. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said "*Iman* is not acquired by merely copying the believers or wishful thinking. It is acquired by firm belief in the heart accompanied by deeds." *Tahalli* is, therefore, an attempt at imitating good people without acting like them. Those who try to look like what they are not, will soon be put to shame. In fact they already won disgrace in the eyes of the saints.

Takhalli: This is an attempt to give up such deeds that stand in the way to Divine Nearness. One of them is the lust for worldliness which has to be driven out of the heart. Another is the love for the hereafter (paradise) which needs to be avoided. The third is vanity and the fourth is bad company which has to be discarded at all costs and under all circumstances.

Shurood: This is an effort to reach Divine Nearness by getting rid of all the veils and obstacles in the way to God, because all misfortunes arise from these veils and obstacles; and when they are removed, the seeker gets united with God.

Qusud: *Qusud* is the plural of *qasd* which means determination to reach Divine nearness. *Qasd* is not governed by motion or rest on the part of the seeker. It is a firm determination in his heart to seek Divine nearness. It may also be called excessive love for God.

Istina: This means purification from all kinds of contamination and replacement of carnal desires by good desires, and bad habits by good habits so that nothing stands between the seekers and God. Although this quality is generally the lot of the prophets, the *auliya* of high status can also be qualified by it.

Istifa: This means that God in his Divine Mercy cleanses the heart of His lover of all impurities and chooses him to reach His nearness. It applies to all kinds of men, vulgar, elect, pious, saints and prophets. Allah has said: "We have given the book (Qur'an) as heritage to those of our servants whom we have chosen (*istafayna*)...." [35:29].

Istilain: This signifies Divine Epiphanies (*tajalliyat*) which overwhelms the seeker and reduces his attributes to naught.

Rein: *Rein* is a kind of veil on the heart i.e. of heresy and sins which cannot be removed except by *iman*. Allah has said: "By no means, but what they did, has contaminated their hearts." [83:14]. It is said that the veils of *rein* cannot be removed.

Ghain: *Ghain* means those veils on the heart which are removable by asking God's forgiveness. These two kinds of veils have already been elaborated in this book at length.

Talbis: It means simulation or dissimulation i.e. an act on the part of a person to appear as what he is not or not to appear what he is. It is neither ostentation (*riya*), nor hypocrisy (*nifaq*). When a Sufi tries to show his good qualities as bad, it is called *talbis*. It applies to God when He shows the unbelievers in their true colours.

Shurb: The Sufis give the name of *shurb* (drink) to the sweetness of faith (*halavat-i-iman*), Divine Grace and Divine Love. It is as much a necessity for the soul of man as water is for the body. My shaikh used to say that a *murid* who is without *shurb* is neither a *murid* nor an *arif*. But a Sufi should not

go in for sensual pleasure, in the name of *shurb*, for while *shurb* takes us near God, sensual pleasures veil us from Him.

Dhawq: *Dhawq* although resembling *shurb*, is different in the sense that while *shurb* refers to pleasure, *dhawq* refers to both pleasure and pain. You can taste sweetness of union and pain of separation in *dhawq*, but in *shurb* you taste only the sweetness of union.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

Lifting of the Eleventh Veil: On *Samaa'* (Spiritual Music)

Know that the means of acquiring knowledge are five: Seeing, hearing, taste, smell and touch. God has created these five doors for the human mind to obtain different kinds of knowledge through them. Four of these senses are situated in a special organ and one, touch, is spread over the whole body. Of all the senses the sense of hearing is most important since message of God sent to mankind through the Messengers is received by hearing the Word of God. It is for this reason that the *Sunnis* regard hearing superior to seeing. If it is argued that seeing is superior to hearing because vision of God is superior to hearing about Him, my reply is that our knowledge of the vision of God in paradise is also derived from hearing about it in the Qur'an. Hence hearing is superior to seeing. Moreover all Divine commands are conveyed to mankind through hearing, and all these orders are first heard and then acted upon.

Section

Hearing of Qur'an and Allied Matters

The best kind of *samaa'* which nourishes the heart, fascinates the soul and charms the ears is the Word of God the Most Glorious, which all human beings, believers or nonbelievers are commanded to hear. It is a miracle of Qur'an that one never gets weary of reading and hearing it, so that even the worst enemies of Islam would love to hear it secretly by night when the Prophet (s.a.w.) was reciting it in prayers and were stunned to hear it; examples were Nadhr bin Harith who was the most eloquent in Arabic language,

Utbah bin Rabia who was bewitchingly eloquent and Abu Jahl who was a renowned orator. One night Utbah went into an ecstasy on hearing the Prophet (s.a.w.) recite a few verses of Qur'an, and said to Abu Jahl, "I am sure these are not the words of any created being." Even the angels would come group after group to listen to the Prophet's recitation and reported back to the Almighty: "Verily, we heard wonderful recitation which guides rightly" [72:1-2]. Once Abdullah bin Hanzala heard the following verse of the Qur'an: "And they will be burnt in hell fire over and over again," [7:39] and started crying violently. It is true the Qur'an is the best guide of all guides, the best speech of all speeches, the best commands of all commands, the best ordinance of all ordinances, and contains the most charming and fascinating statements which have captured so many hearts, captivated so many souls, bewildered so many philosophers and taken so many lives. When Umar bin Khattab heard that his sister and brother-in-law had embraced Islam, he drew his sword to kill them. But when he overheard them reciting *Sura Ta-Ha*, his heart was captivated, and he meekly surrendered to those he had come to kill. It is stated that when Hadhrat Umar heard the verse: "And there are chains and hand cuffs (for sinners) and hell fire and horrible food, and severe punishment," [78:12-13], he fainted. Once someone recited the following words of Qur'an before Umar: "Punishment of thy Lord is due to the sinners and nothing can stop it," [52:7-8], he uttered a cry and fell senseless, and remained ill for one month.

Once the following ayat was recited before Junaid: "O believers why do you say what you do not act upon" [61:2]. Junaid said, "O my Lord, what we say, we say because of Thee, what we do, we do because of Thy Power (*taufiq*), where is, then, our saying and doing?"

It was said that when Shibli heard the following verse: "And remember thy Lord when thou forgettest," [18:23] he shrieked and fell senseless. When he came to his senses, he said, "I wonder at the one who hears and remains unmoved." A shaikh has said, "Once I was reading the following words of God, 'Beware the day when you will be brought before Allah.' [2:281]. I heard a voice from above saying, 'Do not read so loud. Four angels have died from the terror of this verse.' " Once I heard Shaikh Abul Abbas Shaqani reciting: "A slave has no power...." [16:77], and weeping profusely till he fell down senseless. When he came to his senses I asked him the reason; he said, "I have been reciting Qur'an for eleven years and cannot proceed further." When Abul Abbas Ata was asked how much of Qur'an he recited daily, he said, "Formerly I used to finish the Qur'an twice a day, but it is now fourteen years that I have reached as far as *Sura al-Anfaal.*" Once Abul Abbas Qassab asked a man to recite Qur'an to him. He recited the *ayat* in which Prophet Yusuf (a.s.) said to his brothers: "No blame shall be laid on you this day. May God forgive you" [12:92]. Hearing this the shaikh cried: "O Lord, I am more cruel than Yusuf's brothers and Thou art more kind than Yusuf. Deal with me as Yusuf dealt with his cruel brothers."

It is for this reason that all Muslims, good and bad alike, are commanded in the following verse, to listen to the Qur'an: "When the Qur'an is recited listen to it and be silent so that you win His mercy." [7:203].

It is said when the Prophet (s.a.w.) asked ibn Mas'ud to recite the Qur'an to him, he replied, "Shall I recite to thee to whom it has been revealed?" The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "I wish to hear it from another." It shows hearing is more perfect than reading, because speech is a sort of pride and hearing is humility.

It is also said in the Qur'an:

"Give good tidings to those who listen to Qur'an and act upon it." [39:17-18].

It is also said in the Qur'an that when the Qur'an is recited the hearts of the believers are illuminated. [8:2].

It is also said:

"Those who recite Qur'an are blessed with peace of mind. Verily Allah's *dhikr* ensures peace of mind." [13:28].

God has condemned those who listen to the Qur'an but do not believe in what it says. The following *ayats* are about such people:

"God has caused their hearts, ears and eyes to be sealed." [2:7].

These people will therefore repent on the Day of Judgement and say:

"Had we followed what Allah said we would have escaped hell fire." [67:10].

It is also said in the Qur'an, not to be like those who say with their tongues: "We listen to the Qur'an," but do not listen to it by their heart. [6:25]

Allah also warned the Prophet (s.a.w.) himself to be steadfast in obeying Qur'an:

"Be steadfast on what thou hast been commanded" [11:112]

The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "This *ayat* has whitened my hair." He was so much worried by this verse that he went pale and looked exhausted so much so that when he got up he had to put his hands on the ground for support. Seeing this Hadhrat Abu Bakr said, "Sire what is the matter?" The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, "*Sura Hud* has made me old."

It is related by Abu Saeed Khudhri that once he was sitting among the class of destitute called the *Ashab-i-Suffah* who were listening to the Qur'an recited by a *qari*, when the Prophet (s.a.w.) arrived he said *salaam* to all of them and sat down with them in such a manner that he could hardly be distinguished. This was due to the feelings of his absolute humility. He said, "I am grateful to the Almighty for having produced such a blessed community of believers and commanded me to sit with them." He also said, "I

congratulate all of you since Allah Almighty has promised that you people will enter paradise half a day before your wealthy brethren, which is equal to five hundred years."

It is related that once Zurara bin Abi Awf, one of the prominent companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.) was leading a congregational prayer (*jamaat*). As soon as he read an *ayat* of Qur'an he uttered a cry and died. Another companion Abu Ja'far Juhani also instantly expired when someone recited an *ayat* from the Qur'an. Ibrahim Nakhyi, one of the companions of the companions of the Prophet (s.a.w.), has said that while he was passing through a village near Kufah he saw an old woman standing in *salat* (prayer). Since her face was glowing with spiritual lustre he waited till she finished her prayer, and then said *salaam* to her. She said, "Do you know Qur'an?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Recite an *ayat*." He did so. On this she uttered a cry and died.

Ahmad bin Hawari says, "Once I was going in a desert where I saw a young man in a coarse dress standing on the edge of a well. He said to me, 'Ahmad you have arrived in good time, I wish you to recite a verse from the Qur'an which might unite me with God.' Allah inspired me to recite: 'Verily, those who say "Allah is our Lord and then are steadfast." ' [41:30] The young man replied, 'Ahmad, by Allah, thou hast recited the very verse an angel was reading to me just now.' He said this and passed away."

Section

On Hearing Poetry

Know that it is permissible to hear poetry since the Prophet (s.a.w.) heard it and the companions also heard and composed it. The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "Some poetry is wisdom (*hikmat*)."

He has also said:

"Wisdom is the believers lost she-camel, wherever he finds her he has the best right to her."

He has also said:

"The truest word ever uttered by the Arabs of paganism is the verse of poet Labid: 'Everything except Allah is non-existent.' "

Commentary: This Hadith of the Prophet (s.a.w.) forms one of the arguments often quoted in support of *wahdat-ul-wujud* which has been affirmed by the author more than once in this book.

Amr bin Sharid has said, "The Prophet asked my father to recite out of Ummaya's poetry, so he recited a hundred verses and at the end of each verse, the Prophet cried 'Go on.' The Prophet said, 'Ummaya has come close to Islam by his poetry.' "

Many instances can be narrated of the Prophet (s.a.w.) listening to poetry. But it is a pity that some people erroneously believe it is unlawful in Islam, and go on defaming it. But there are others who maintain that poetry is lawful and spend their lives in listening to love-songs admiring the beauty, locks and moles of the beloveds. I do not intend to reproduce the arguments in favour and against it, suffice it to say that the Sufi shaikhs follow the example of the Prophet (s.a.w.) who on being asked what poetry is, said:

"Whatever is good in poetry is good, and whatever is bad in it is bad."

That is to say if poetry consists of what is unlawful, such as backbiting, calumny and abuses, it is unlawful whether it is expressed in poetry or prose; and what is lawful like moral sayings, truth and good behaviour is good in both prose and poetry. In short, listening to unlawful poetry is as bad as it is to cast amorous glances on females which is a source of evil. Those who regard such hearing as lawful must also regard looking and touching beauty as lawful, which is even heretical. If someone says, "I hear only God and seek only God in human beauty," it follows that others may also say that they hear only God and see only Him, then the whole religious law is rendered null and void and the religion itself crumbles to dust. The foolish aspirants think that when the Sufi shaikhs are absorbed in ecstasies, they are prompted by sensual impulses, and therefore start indulging in similar practices. They judge the Sufi shaikhs by their own standards and imitate them, taking up the form and ignoring the spirit. This is one of the greatest evil of our times. I am going to deal with it fully at its proper place.

Section

On Hearing Songs and Melodies

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"Beautify your voices by reading the Qur'an."

It is said in the Qur'an:

"Allah adds to His creation what He pleases." [35:1]

The commentators of Qur'an opine that it refers to beautiful voices.

The Prophet (s.a.w.) has said:

"He who wishes to hear the voice of Daud, he should hear the voice of Abu Musa al-Ash'ari."

It is stated in an authentic Hadith that the inhabitants of paradise enjoy hearing music and melodies from every tree. When different voices and melodies are mingled together they become fascinating not only to mankind, but to all living creatures. This is but natural. Philosophers and physicians who claim to possess knowledge, have discussed it at length and have written books on music. This is manifest in many kinds of musical instruments (*mazamir*) today which have been invented to appease their lust as desired by Satan. It is said that once Ishaq of Mossal was playing on the harp, a nightingale was so much enraptured that it fell on the ground and died.

Ibrahim Khawas says, "Once I came to an Arab tribe and stayed in the guest house of their chief. I saw a Negro slave lying chained out in the sun and crying. I felt pity for him and decided to ask the chief to release him. When food was brought to me I refused to take it knowing that nothing grieves an Arab more than this. When the chief asked me the reason I said I wanted a favour. He begged me to eat and he would give all his wealth to me if desired. I said, 'I do not want your wealth. All I want is that you forgive this slave for my sake.' He replied, 'First hear what his offence is then remove his chains.' He said, 'This slave is a camel driver and has a sweet voice. I sent him with a few camels to my lands to bring some corn. He put a double load on every camel and chanted so sweetly that the camels started running at top speed. But as soon as they reached the destination and were unloaded they died one by one.' While we were talking, a herd of camels that had been without water for three days came to drink at the well. The chief told the slave to sing again. When he did so all the camels became so absorbed in it that they forgot about drinking and went back to the desert in ecstasy. The chief pardoned the slave and released him for my sake, and gave him to me."

It is a matter of common experience that when the drivers of camels and asses sing melodious songs, the beasts get delighted and run fast. In Khurasan and Iraq when the hunters go deer hunting, they beat a brass plate in such a way that the deer stand still and are caught. In India also the deer are enchanted by melodious songs, go to sleep by the songs and are caught. Similarly young children are lulled to sleep by melodious tunes. It is said by the sages that such children who love music grow up into great men. This is corroborated by the fact that when the King of Persia died, Buzurjamhar, the *wazir* called for musicians to test the ability of his child to be enthroned. When the musicians started singing the child started moving his head and arms. This is how he was considered fit for kingship.

Anyone who finds no pleasure in music is either a liar or a hypocrite, or he is mad. In any case he is out of the category of men and animals. Some theologians maintain that music is unlawful according to *shariat*. But others are of the opinion that there is no harm in hearing musical instruments if it is not done for sensual enjoyment. There are many Hadith to this effect.

It is related by Ayesha (the Holy Prophet's wife): "Once a slave girl was singing in my house when Umar (r.a.) came and asked permission to come in. As soon as he came the

girl ran away, and the Prophet (s.a.w.) smiled. Umar said, 'O Prophet of Allah what made thee smile?' The Prophet (s.a.w.) said, 'A slave-girl was singing here, but she ran away when you came in.' Umar said, 'I will not go from here until I hear what the Prophet (s.a.w.) heard.' So the Prophet (s.a.w.) called the girl back and she started singing."

There are many Hadith like this narrated by the Companions of the Prophet. Abu Abdur-Rahman Sulami has collected them in his book *Kitab-us-Samaa',* and has proved *samaa'* as lawful. But the Sufis do not go for permissibility or otherwise of *samaa'* like the common folk, rather, what they aim at is spiritual benefits. Once when I was at Merv, a famous scholar belonging to the Ahl Hadith sect said, "I have written a book in which I have proved that *samaa'* is permissible." I said, "It is a pity you have created a great trouble (*musibat*) in pronouncing lawful what is the root of all evils." He said, "Then why do you hear what is evil?" I said, "The question is not of permissibility or non-permissibility. If the effects thereof are spiritually beneficial *samaa'* is *halal* (lawful). If the effects are harmful it is *haram* (unlawful). If the effects are *mubah* (permissible) *samaa'* is *mubah*."

There are many things which are apparently harmful but are really beneficial. Judgement cannot be pronounced on outward appearance.

Section

On *Ahkam-i-Samaa'* (Principles of Music)

Know that the question of *samaa'* depends on various circumstances, i.e. various natures and temperaments of mankind. It is not, therefore right to lay down one law for all. In brief there are two categories of the listeners of *samaa'*: Those who go in for spiritual benefits and those who hear to appease sensual desires, with good and bad consequences respectively. If the nature of man is inclined towards evil, *samaa'* produces evil effects. If on the other hand, his nature is good, *samaa'* is good for him. The case of Hadhrat Daud (David), peace be upon him, is a good example to illustrate what has been said above. When the Almighty commissioned him as His Vicegerent, He bestowed a sweet voice upon him, and caused his throat to be as melodious as musical instruments, so that animals and birds from the mountains and jungles would flock around him and listen to his melodies for days without food and drink. Even the water ceased to flow and the birds fell on the ground dead.

It is said that once the people went on hearing his songs for one month without food and drink, and the children neither wept nor asked for milk; and many persons were found dead in the end. It is related that once the toll of the dead was seven hundred ladies and twelve thousand men. After that God desired to test who were fake and who were genuine, and this led *Iblis* (Satan) to play his trick. Consequently, he sought God's permission to mislead mankind and it was granted. So he manufactured a tambourine

and a flute and started his show just opposite Hadhrat Daud's gathering. Thus Daud's gathering was divided into two groups: the blessed and the damned. Those who were unlucky went over to Satan, while those who were lucky stood by Daud. Since they had aimed at spiritual benefits they were fully absorbed in Hadhrat Daud's songs, and wanted nothing but God. They regarded the Devil's voice as temptation and a test set by God, and realised that man's duty was to see things as they are, and to judge right from wrong. Therefore if a man hears *samaa'* with this intention and in this mood what he hears is lawful.

Some imposters, however, claim that *samaa'* is not really what it appears to be. This is untenable (*mohal*) because perfection of saintship (*walayat*) consists in seeing things as they really are. If that is so, your perception is correct, if it is otherwise it is wrong. The Prophet (s.a.w.) used to pray:

"O God, let us see things as they are."

Therefore in *samaa'* too, one should hear it as it is. The reason why some people are misled by *samaa'* is that they hear it without reality. If their *samaa'* is according to reality they can escape from evil consequences. You must know that when the ignorant people heard Qur'an, they were misled. One of them was Nasr bin Harith who said about the word of God, "These are tales of the old times." But when Abdullah bin Ali Sarab who was the recorder of Qur'an, heard it he said:

"Allah is the best Revealer."

Similarly some people regarded the following *ayat* of the Qur'an as negation of God's Vision:

"The eyes attain not unto Him, He attains into the eyes." [6:103]

And a class of people quote the following *ayat* to assert that God exists in every direction and space:

"Then He settled Himself on the Throne (*Arsh*)." [7:52]

Some are misled to believe that God physically comes and quote the following *ayat*:

"And Thy Lord shall come and angels rank by rank." [89:23]

Since error was ingrained in their nature, they profited little from the Word of God. On the other hand when a *Muwahhid* (unitarian, monotheist) sees a poem, he regards God as the creator of the poet. Thus he finds the right way even in wrong things, while the renegades mentioned above go wrong by right things.

Section

Sayings of *Mashaikh* on *Samaa'*

The Sufi shaikhs have made subtle statements about *samaa'*. Dhunnun, the Egyptian said:

"*Samaa'* is Divine inspiration which prompts the heart to reach God. So those who are lovers of God are led to His nearness, and those who hear it for sensual desires are misled to negligence (*zandqa*)."

This worthy shaikh does not mean that *samaa'* automatically leads to Divine Nearness. What he means is that the seeker should not listen to *samaa'* to appease his sensual desires, but that he should aim at gaining Divine Nearness. He who aims at spiritual benefits reaches the Truth, while he who hears for sensual desires is veiled and resorts to all sorts of interpretations (*tawil*). Actually "*zandqa*" is a Persian word Arabicised to signify *tawil* (interpretation), on the analogy of the interpresentations of the Magian scripture *Zand-o-Pazand*. The Muslim philologists, therefore, give the name of *zandqa* to everything which negates the exoteric sense of the Word of God and clings only to the esoteric interpretation. At present the Shias of Egypt who are the remnants of the Magians, think like that. Therefore the word *zindiq* was considered fit to be applied to them. Dhunnun of Egypt, therefore used the term *zindiq* correctly in respect of those who give wrong interpretation to *samaa.'*

Shibli says, "*Samaa'* is outwardly a temptation (*fitna*) and inwardly a cure (*ibrat*). He who knows its inward blessings, hears it lawfully; if not he invites temptation, and jumps into fire." It means *samaa'* is dangerous for those whose hearts are not engrossed in God.

Abu Ali Rodbari has said, "Would that I never heard it, because everything has its obligations (*adab*), and if one cannot fulfil its obligations he feels like giving it up." One of the shaikhs has said, "*Samaa'* is the instrument of illuminating the heart to see what lies in the hidden world, so that he attains to Divine Presence." This is because absence from the Beloved is the greatest calamity for the lover and is his worst quality. If the lover is absent from the Beloved physically but is present with Him spiritually it does not matter much. But when he is spiritually absent, love is uprooted.

My shaikh said, "*Samaa'* is the panacea for the patients of love and he who has reached the destination does not need it." This is because seeing obviates the necessity of hearing. Hearing amounts to news about the Beloved; but when one is with the Beloved news is no more necessary.

Husri says: "What is that *samaa'* which ceases to unite you with the Beloved when the singer is silent. *Samaa'* is *samaa'* only when you are never separated. And this is the

greatest achievement in the realm of friendship. When the seeker reaches that stage he hears *samaa'* from every stone." With Allah rests all power.

Section

On Difference of Opinion About *Samaa'*

Sufi shaikhs hold different opinions about *samaa'*. A class of them maintain that since *samaa'* is an instrument of hearing about the absent, it is of no use to one who is united because when one is face to face with the Beloved hearing about Him is no more necessary. According to them *samaa'* is necessary for the beginners who get attracted to the Beloved by it, while those who are united get distracted by it. While others are of the view that *samaa'* is the instrument of union, and because love demands the fullest union and deepest absorption, unless the whole of the lover is completely drowned in (the whole of) the Beloved, he is deficient in love. Just as the heart is appeased by loving and the soul (*ruh*) is overjoyed by vision (*mushahidah*), and the spirit (*sirr*) by union, and the body by service, similarly the ear is pleased by hearing about the beloved as is the eye by seeing Him. They maintain that *samaa'* is the instrument of presence with God, and he who is absent from Him is a disbeliever, and the disbeliever is not worthy of *samaa'*.

Samaa' is of two kinds: Direct (*bewasta*) and indirect (*bawasta*). He who hears from the *qar* (singer) is a man of absence (*ghaibat*) and he who hears from the *yar* (friend) is a man of presence (*hadhur*). That is why a venerable shaikh has said, "I am not prepared to listen to, or talk about, any created being except the Creator Himself."

Section

Regarding their Grades (*Maratib*) in *Samaa'*

Know that every shaikh has a particular status in *Samaa'* and enjoys it to the extent of that status. As a penitent refreshes his sense of shame and remorse, the lover refreshes his love, the believer refreshes his belief, the *murid* refreshes his determination, and the dervish refreshes his total dependence on God and total independence on other than God.

In short, *samaa'* is like the sun which shines on all things, but affects them differently. Some are burnt, some are illuminated, some are melted, and some are nourished by it. Broadly speaking there are three grades of Sufi shaikhs so far as *samaa'* is concerned: The beginners (*mubtadi*), the middlemen (*mutawassit*) and the adepts (*kamil*). I will now deal with each group for facility of understanding.

Section

Samaa' is an inspiration from God (*Haq*), and the human body made of folly and frivolity cannot be influenced by anything except that Divine inspiration. It is Divine inspiration which turns the tables. Sometimes it makes them lose their senses. Sometimes people lose their lives by it. In short there is none who remains unaffected. In ancient Rum (Rome) they had invented a strange device called *Ankaliyun*. The Greeks give this name to anything which is wonderful. It was a stringed musical instrument and its sound would cure a patient of any disease in a few days. Nonetheless, it was so potent that if a man was kept in that room for a long period he died. Although there is a fixed time for every one's death according to the Preserved Tablet (*Lauh-i-Mahfuz*), yet there is always a cause of death. So that instrument served as cause of death. But the physicians who invented it were accustomed to it and were immune from its fatal effects.

Similarly I know a worm in India which lives on poison. That poison is its food. In a town in Turkistan I saw a mouse which was living in fiery lava coming out of a mountain, but as soon as it was taken out it died. What I mean to say by citing these examples is that in the beginning the seekers get excited in *samaa'*, but finally get used to it and find perfect peace of mind. The same was the case with the Prophet (s.a.w.) who could not bear revelation of the Qur'an in the beginning, but later on he got so accustomed to it that he felt restless when it was delayed. That is the reason why the spiritual seekers get excited in *samaa'* in the beginning but when they reach higher stages they are at peace. One of Junaid's *murids* used to get excited by *samaa'* and disturbed his companions. When a complaint was lodged, the shaikh warned him that if he did not overpower his excitement in future, he would be expelled. Abu Muhammad Jurari says, "I was present at the occasion when that *murid* of Junaid restrained himself for some time, then shivering, fell down senseless and remained in that state for the whole day. I do not know if it was due to *samaa'* or his shaikh's influence." Once a man uttered a loud cry in *samaa'*, fell on the ground and was dead. I have heard from Shaikh Abu Muslim Faris bin Ghalib that once a dervish went into ecstasy in *samaa'* and when some one put his hand on his head and bade him to sit up, he sat up and expired. Junaid said once a dervish died in his presence in *samaa'*.

Shaikh Darraj says, "Once I was going along the bank of the river Tigris when I saw a girl singing a verse on top of a house while a young man listened. After she finished singing he said, 'Young girl sing it once more as I have only a moment to live.' When she repeated the verse, the youth uttered a cry (*naara*) and was dead. Seeing this the master of that girl who was a rich man, gave up everything and became a dervish." This shows how *samaa'* purifies the sinners and reforms them. But nowadays there are some renegades who gather together to hear *samaa'* and claim that they do so for God, but they become misguided and are doomed to destruction.

Once Junaid was asked by his followers if they could go to the church for the sake of admonition, and to see the Christians in disgrace and thereby thanking God for the gift

of Islam. He said, "If you can bring the inmates of the church to Islam, you can go, otherwise not." All depends on what you are. If a true believer goes into the tavern, it becomes a place of worship by his influence. But if a drunkard goes in the mosque he turns it into a tavern by his wickedness.

A shaikh says, "Once I was going to Baghdad with a dervish. When he heard someone singing a verse he uttered a cry and fell down dead." Similarly Abu Ali Rodbari says, "Once I saw a dervish hearing *samaa'*. When the singer recited a touching verse, he fell down and lost his life." A man says, "I was walking with Ibrahim Khawas in a mountainous region when I suddenly felt like singing. When I recited a few verses Ibrahim asked me to sing more. When I did so, he went into ecstasy and started dancing. I was surprised to see that every foot he struck on the stone sank into it as if it were wax. Then he fell down senseless. When he regained his senses he said, 'You are here, but I have been in paradise.' "

I once saw a dervish walking in the state of *muraqabah* (meditation) in Azerbaijan singing some verses with tears flowing over his cheeks. Then he sat down leaning against a rock and was no more.

Section

Some *mashaikh* have expressed their objections to hearing poems and reciting the Qur'an in melodious tones, and they not only abstained from such practices but have warned their followers against it. Such people are of several categories, and each category has its own reasons.

Some of them maintain that such practices are unlawful in the light of the Prophet's traditions (Hadith). For instance, the Holy Prophet, peace be upon him, rebuked the maid-servant of Hasan bin Thabit and forbade her to sing. Hadhrat Umar flogged a companion who used to sing. Hadhrat Ali criticised Amir Muawiyah for keeping singing girls. Hadhrat Ali is also reported to have scolded his son Hasan for looking at a singing girl, saying that she was Satan's companion. There are many more Hadiths which can be said to be against singing. According to this class of *mashaikh*, the strongest reason against singing is the consensus of *ulama* who have been declaring *samaa'* as objectionable throughout the past ages, so much so that a section of *ulama* has declared it as *haram* (unlawful). In this respect they quote Abul Harith Banani who has said: "One night I was invited to take part in a gathering of holy persons who were eager to see me. When I reached there I saw an old man surrounded by his followers. As soon as I sat there, the old man wanted my permission for *samaa'*. I agreed to it and the musician started singing verses on the topic of separation from the beloved. At this they got up and started dancing and singing melodiously with the singer, and I remained amazed at that scene. They continued this till dawn. At the end the old man said, 'O Shaikh, do you know who am I and who are these people?' I said, 'I do not know, nor did your awe-inspiring personality allow me to ask questions.' He said, 'I am *Azazil* and presently I am known

as *Iblis* and these people are my off-springs (*zurriyat*). I have two objects in view in holding such meetings of *samaa'*. Firstly I mourn the state of my separation from the position of honour I enjoyed (before damnation). Secondly I misguide the pious people by this device.' " "From that day on" said the Shaikh, "I never listened to *samaa'*."

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi have heard Shaikh and Imam Abul Abbas Ashqani saying that once he saw a party of naked jins dancing in a gathering of *samaa'*, and the participants were looking at them and were feeling excited.

There is another group of *mashaikh* who do not indulge in *samaa'* for fear of being imitated by their followers and going astray. As Junaid said to a newly converted *murid*, "If you want to keep your *iman* intact do not indulge in *samaa'* when you are young, and avoid being imitated by the young folks as a lover of *samaa'* when you are old."

There are other *mashaikh* who hold the opinion that there are two kinds of admirers of *samaa'*: *Lahi* (frivolous) and *ilahi* (divine). The former are drowned in sin, while the latter save themselves through acts of mortification, austerities and spiritual purification. But they (the *Mashaikh*) themselves neither agree with the former nor with the latter.

Another class of *mashaikh* maintain that since *samaa'* is dangerous for the common folks, they abstain from it lest the common people imitate them and go astray. This is a praiseworthy attitude on their part.

Some say that since the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said, "The best Muslim is he who gives up what does not concern him," they do not indulge in *samaa'* as it is an unnecessary waste of time.

Others hold that *samaa'* is a *khabr* (information) which becomes redundant when one is in the state of direct vision. *Khabr* has no *qadr* (value) when one is united. These are the opinions of different classes of *mashaikh* in brief.

Section

Wajd, Wujud and *Tawajud*

Know that *wajd* and *wujud* are verbal nouns (*masadir*). The former means grief and the latter means "to find". These words are used to express the following two states: the grief of desire to meet, and the happiness of meeting the beloved. The difference between *huzn* and *wajd* is this, that while the former is used for selfish ends, the latter is employed to denote a longing to meet others.

It is difficult to explain *wajd* which means pain, for pain (*alam*) cannot be explained by pen (*qalam*). It is a mystery between the seeker and the Sought which can be expressed only by revelation (*wahy*). It is equally difficult to explain the nature of the word "*wujud*".

It is a sort of an ecstasy which cannot be expressed in words. In other words *wujud* is Divine Grace. I think *wajd* is painful longing for the Beloved, and *wujud* is the attainment of the Beloved. The former may be termed as the state of veiling (*hijab*) and the latter as unveiling (*kashf*).

The Sufi shaikhs have different opinions in regard to the superiority of one over the other. A class of *mashaikh* are of the view that *wujud* is the characteristic of *murids* and *wajd* is that of the *arifs* (gnostics), and because the gnostics are superior to the novices, *wajd* is superior to *wujud*. This is because the word *wujud* (attainment) can be used in respect of what is attainable. But since God is infinite and hence unattainable, therefore what you can find (*wujud*) is only a transient pleasure or sense of Divine nearness; but *wajd* is something superior. It is an unattainable longing for the attainment of the infinite Being which is never attained because there is no end to the infinite Being.

Some of them, however, hold that *wajd* is the passion of the *murids*, while *wujud* is the attainment of Divine Nearness; and therefore attainment of nearness (*wujud*) is superior to mere desire for attainment. The controversy can be settled by the following example.

Once Shibli, in a state of ecstasy, went to his shaikh, Junaid, and found him sad. He said, "What makes you sad?" Junaid said: *"Man talaba wajada"* (He who seeks is sad.) But Shibli said: *"Man wajada talaba"* (He who is sad is a seeker). Opinion of the *mashaikh* is divided on these two statements. Junaid favoured *wajd* while Shibli preferred *wujud*. I am in favour of what Junaid said. This is because when the seeker realises that the infinite is unattainable there is no end to his grief. This has been elaborated at a separate place. The Sufi shaikhs are unanimous on the point that sobriety is superior to intoxication, because when intoxication is overwhelming the pilgrim is in danger of being lost. But when sobriety is overwhelming the pilgrim is safe. It is clear from all this that the seeker must always stick to sobriety and *shariat*. When he is overwhelmed by intoxication he is totally lost, and when he is lost he is a *majnun* (out of senses), not a *wali-Allah* and His vicegerent. This is what Junaid meant. Hence Abu Yazid said: "Heresy (*kufr*) of the magnanimous is higher than Islam of the covetous." That is to say the magnanimous cannot go astray.

Therefore Junaid said: "Shibli is intoxicated. If he becomes sober he would be the *Imam* (Grand-guide) of mankind."

Once Junaid, Muhammad bin Masruq, and Abul Abbas bin Ata were together in a gathering of *samaa'* and the *qawwal* (singer) was singing a verse, while Junaid sat calm and quiet, the other two shaikhs were overpowered by ecstasies. When he was asked why he was not affected, Junaid recited the following *ayat* of Qur'an:

"When you look at the mountains you think they are stationary, while they are moving fast like clouds." [27:88]

Commentary: The commentators of Qur'an think the verse refers to the condition of the mountains on the Day of Doom when everything in the universe would be rent into pieces that would be flying in the air. But the tense used in this verse is present not future, and the verse really means that the mountains look stationary, but are moving fast in reality. Science tells us that the earth is revolving round the sun and with it the mountains too are moving fast. Mind you the Qur'an was revealed thirteen hundred years ago, when mankind was not aware of the recent discoveries like the earth moving round the sun. In fact the famous scientist Galileo was hanged in the Middle Ages by the Christian priests. His crime was that he said the earth moves round the sun. Those who regard al-Qur'an to be the word of Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.), and not of God, should know that the discovery of the earth revolving round the sun was made in the twelfth century A.D. while God gave this information in the Qur'an in the sixth century. The Qur'an therefore cannot be the word of the Prophet (s.a.w.). It is the Word of God.

The French scientist Maurice Buccaille has also refuted in his book, "The Bible, the Qur'an and Science" the allegation that Prophet Muhammad (s.a.w.) constructed the Qur'an out of the stories in the Bible. He has said that all statements in the Bible about creation have been found to be wrong according to the modern scientific data, and that all statements in the Qur'an about creation are squarely in accord with the latest scientific data. If the Qur'an was copied from the Bible, as alleged, how could a man (Muhammad s.a.w.) living in the sixth/seventh century A.D., make scientifically correct statements in the Qur'an when the statements in the Bible are scientifically incorrect.

Actually the word *tawajud* connotes a deliberate attempt at producing *wajd*, by thinking of God's bounties, and by imitating movements of the great Sufi masters. Some people try to imitate mere movements of the Sufi shaikhs such as dancing and jumping which is wrong. Others, however, imitate their spiritual states by effort. This is correct because the Prophet (s.a.w.) has said: "He who tries to resemble a people is one of them." He has also said: "When you recite the Qur'an, weep, if you cannot weep, try to weep." According to this Hadith, *tawajud* is permissible. That is why a Sufi shaikh said: "I walk a thousand miles in falsehood in the hope that one step in the journey is in the right direction."

Section

On Dancing (*Raqs*)

Know that *raqs* is not permissible either in *shariat* (Islamic Law) or in *tariqat* (Sufism). It is unanimously agreed that *raqs* is a frivolity (*lahw*) if it is done with good intention, and it is an absurdity (*laghw*) if done for the sake of ostentation. None of the *mashaikh*

has commended it, nor does it stand proved by any tradition. The traditions quoted by the Anthropomorphists (Hashwiya Sect) are not authentic. But since the movements of *raqs* resemble those of the *Ahli Tawajud* (forced Sufism), some pretenders imitate them and think it is religion. I know some such people who think Sufism is nothing more than *raqs*. But it stands condemned by all genuine Sufis. In short, dancing is unlawful from the point of view of both revelation and reason. However, when one gets excited by *samaa'* and his heart is full of intense emotions to the point of ecstasy, that sort of agitation should not lead to dancing. On the contrary the emotions have to be suppressed. If not, flow of spiritual inspiration is hindered. It is difficult to explain it to those who do not experience it.

Section

Looking at Human Beauty

Looking at human beauty and associating with youths is forbidden in *shariat*. And he who declares it lawful is an unbeliever. All traditions quoted in favour of it are not authentic. I have seen some people who attribute this evil to Sufi shaikhs and have made it religion. This is absolutely wrong. All Sufi shaikhs have expressed objection to this practice and regard it as wickedness. It is the incarnationists (*hululian*) who have created this mischief (may Allah curse them), and have been responsible for defaming the Sufis and Sufism. God knows best.

Section

On the Rules of *Samaa' (Adab-i-Samaa')*

One of the rules (*adab*) of *samaa'* is that *samaa'* should not be resorted to unless there is a strong urge in the heart for it. Nor should it be practised as a matter of habit; but it should be practised seldom so that its reverence is maintained. Presence of the spiritual guide is also necessary in *samaa'*. The place should be cleared of common people and the singer should be a respectable man. Your hearts should be emptied of worldly thoughts, and freed from the desires of making *samaa'* as an amusement. You must not go out of control unless you are overpowered. When some inspiration comes of its accord do not try to stop it; and when it is not coming do not try to force it. That is to say if it shakes you, get shaken, if it calms you get calm. You must be able to distinguish between strong inspiration and ecstasy. You must also be capable of receiving Divine influence and doing full justice to it. When the influence (*faizan*) comes, it should not be rejected; and when it is absent it should not be attracted. When you are in a state of excitement, you should not expect help from others and when the help is offered it should not be rejected. You should see that no one present is disturbed by your actions. Nor should you ask anyone to let you know the meanings of the song. You should neither force the singer to sing

songs of your choice, nor find fault with what he sings. If you do not enjoy a song which is being enjoyed by others, keep quiet and do not make a fuss. Everybody has his own state of spirituality and must be allowed to satisfy his urge.

I, Ali bin Uthman al-Jallabi, am of the opinion that the novices (*mubtadiyan*) should not be allowed to hear *samaa'* so that they do not get spoiled, because such gatherings are fraught with dangers. For instance, women on the roofs and elsewhere look at the dervishes which itself is a great risk, or at some handsome youths in the gathering whom the ignorant people have made into *madhhala* (object of love).

In the end, I seek pardon from God for my sins and I implore Him to save me inwardly and outwardly from all calamities and ask the readers to pray for me to be vouchsafed by His Vision by His Grace. Blessings of Allah be on Prophet Muhammad peace be upon him.

Appendix One

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Hadhrat Syed Ali bin Uthman al-Hujweri, popularly known as Data Ganj Bakhsh (Bestower of Spiritual Treasures) belonged to place called Hujwer in the town of Ghazna, Afghanistan. He lived during the 5th century A.H. (11th century A.D.) and was well versed in all the Islamic sciences such as Tafsir (exegesis) of the Qur'an, Hadith (Traditions of the Prophet), Fiqh (Muslim Law) and dogmatic theology (Ilmu Kalam). Al-Hujweri's spiritual lineage traces back to Hadhrat Junaid Baghdadi through the three intermediaries Al-Husri, An-Nasrabi, and Shibli.

In the course of his spiritual journey to God, he journeyed physically to many countries, often alone and with hardship. These places included Turkestan, Transoxania, Iran, Iraq, and Syria where he met innumerable Sufi shaikhs, many of whom he has mentioned in this book. He went to Lahore in the later part of his life to spread Islam, converting large numbers of Hindus into Muslims. He passed away in Lahore in 469 A.H. (1077 A.D.) where his maqam currently stands, visited by people from near and far.

Kashful Mahjub, originally in Persian , was written at the request of a student of Sufism at that time, who had asked the shaikh to compile a comprehensive study on tasawwuf (Sufism) as a guide for spiritual aspirants. Although al-Hujweri was a master in the science of Islamic scholasticism and his judgments based on logic , the conclusions he arrives at are the result of his deep spiritual experience, where he shows the absence of any conflict between real Sufism and Islamic Shariah.

Starting from the life of the Prophet's brimful experience of Divine nearness, Presence, Union and Communion, this book describes the spiritual experiences of the Companions of the Prophet, Companions of the Companions (tabi'in), their Companions (taba-tabi'in), and the Imams (heads) of the four schools of Islamic law (Ahli-Sunnah-wal-Jama'ah), showing in truth, "when Sufism was made to leave Islam," and that it is not the so called question of "when Sufism 'entered' Islam." This book also explains the various aspects of Sufism in a thorough yet simple manner.

This Edition of Kashful Mahjub, contains for the first time ever, an invaluable comprehensive English commentary by a practicing Sufi shaikh, further clarifying in today's language and context, the various subtleties of Sufism in an understandable form rarely found elsewhere.

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The Translator and Commentator of this book, was Hadhrat Maulana Wahid Bakhsh Rabbani (r.a.), one of the eminent Sufi Saints of this century. He spent 12 years in the company of his shaikh Hadhrat Maulana Syed Mo (r.a.), and was a practising Sufi for over 55 years until his passing Zulkaedah 1415 (April 1995). Like his shaikh, he had written numer of which "Islamic Sufism", a comprehensive manual on Sufism ne of his masterpieces. He also translated many valuable Sufi to Urdu including "Mirratul Asrar", "Maqabis-ul-Majalis", and nd was a recognised Master of Sufism of his time.

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